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PEL AND  
SOCIAL QUESTIONS  
AMBROSE SHEPHERD





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THE GOSPEL AND SOCIAL  
QUESTIONS



“Talk of the questions of the day,—there is but one question, and that is the Gospel. It can and will correct everything needing correction. My only hope for the world is in bringing the human mind into contact with Divine Revelation.”

*William Ewart Gladstone.*

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# THE GOSPEL AND SOCIAL QUESTIONS

BY  
AMBROSE SHEPHERD

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*"Who made me a judge or a divider over you?"*

*—St. Luke xii. 14.*

*I*N the "*British Weekly*" of December 12, 1901, there appeared an address by Mr. Hall Caine, entitled: "*The Gospel and the Social Question.*" I have found both pleasure and profit in Mr. Caine's novels, and it was with keen interest that I turned to the report of his opinions and convictions about the Gospel in its relation to social questions. The expression of these opinions took the form of an uncompromising attack upon the attitude of the Newspaper Press and the Christian Churches toward the labour movement. I have no concern, in this lecture, with the part of the attack which was directed against the newspapers. I have strong feelings about the influence of the Press, and the way that influence is used; and while I do not commit myself to a single accusation that Mr. Hall Caine brings against those who own and conduct our great newspapers, I thank him very sincerely for handling them, as he handles the Churches, with no mailed fist.

## PREFACE

REFERENCE is made at the opening of this little book to the circumstance out of which it has grown. When my attempted reply to the strictures by Mr. Hall Caine, on the attitude of the Churches to Political and Social Reforms, appeared in the *British Weekly*, I received many letters of criticism and remonstrance. Most of my correspondents complained that I had said either too much or too little. Too much in the form of a somewhat censorious attack on the faults and failings of working-men ; and too little in the way of fair recognition of their difficulties and limitations, and of their just grievances against the Churches.

When I wrote the address, it did not seem likely that I should hear any more about it, after the occasion for which it was prepared. Had it occurred to me that I might have to return to the subject, I should have written with some thought of the proportions of the subject as a whole. Some things would have been put differently, but the substance of what

is written would have been the same. If ministers are to be of any service to working-men they must talk, not down to them, but with them. In the correspondence I have mentioned, I was not surprised to find that they were working-men who saw my point of view.

Much is said in these addresses about working-men. In this description I do not include the residuum of our population ; nor yet those who, from many causes, are little more than prisoners of poverty. These bear but a small proportion to the great bodies of working-men who, were they to make the most of their wages, and the best of their chances, would go far to make "poverty," as we now understand it, a meaningless term. "That admirable book by Mr. S. Rowntree on *Poverty in York*," says Mr. John Burns, "shows that manageable aggregations of people, even with a surfeit of religious aid, are confronted with the disease of capitalist poverty which is endemic, where not congenital." But I submit that York is not the city for Mr. Rowntree's experiment, if by it he means to indicate the average position of the workers.

What labour there is in York is almost entirely unskilled, and is paid accordingly. It would be more to the purpose to know how Halifax or Huddersfield would bear the test which in the case of York has received so much attention. I am persuaded that the poor of whom we hear so much—the

very poor who are poor because of circumstances they cannot influence—are few, as compared with the vast masses of working-men who, were they to use for all it is worth what they have and might have, could speedily lift themselves and those below them to far higher conditions than are to be found to-day. Just as a man is his own true friend, or his own real enemy, so is it with working-men. You may help them to work out their social salvation, but you cannot work out their social salvation for them. “My oppressor is not my employer,” said a working-man to me once, “he is that thoughtless drinking brute you see half asleep there at that bench.”

In preparing these addresses, I have availed myself of the help of others, possibly to a greater extent than I know. Fortunately, or unfortunately, for me, I have a tenacious memory, which retains for long, not only a thought that strikes me, but the form in which it is expressed. Where I have used a quotation, or tried to paraphrase something I have read, I have, so far as I know, indicated the circumstance in the usual way. Years ago I made a few notes from brief newspaper reports of two sermons—one preached by Dr. Oswald Dykes, and the other by Rev. J. Estlin Carpenter, M.A. I have utilized these notes in the seventh address especially; and to these gentlemen I express my deep sense of indebtedness.

The addresses are printed almost exactly as they were spoken; this will explain, though it may not



excuse, the personal note running through them. I have relied, and for a good reason, upon my personal experience in dealing with the subjects under discussion, rather than upon any knowledge I possess of what is called their academic side. I expect to be told, should these addresses receive any attention, that they are simply a parade of impracticable suggestions; and that they leave the questions in debate exactly where they found them. I trust that at the end of two or three years from now I may have done something to demonstrate to the religious public of Glasgow that the work described in the sixth address can be repeated here. One thing would give me pain—that is, if any of my brother ministers should feel themselves justified in resenting the tone of these addresses, as touching the work of the ministry. No man holds his brethren in higher esteem than I do; no man believes more firmly that better men are not to be found in this world. Nothing but my sense of comradeship, and a profound desire to further the interests of the work to which we are committed, would have constrained me to offer this hostage to the criticism, and possibly misunderstanding, of any readers this little book may secure.

AMBROSE SHEPHERD.

6, *Thornville Terrace,*  
*Glasgow,*

# HINDRANCES TO REALIZATIONS

“ Who made me a judge or a divider over you ? ”

—*St. Luke* xii. 14

# I

## HINDRANCES TO REALIZATIONS

**I**N the *British Weekly* of December 12, 1901, there appeared an address by Mr. Hall Caine, entitled: "The Gospel and the Social Question." I have found both pleasure and profit in Mr. Caine's novels, and it was with keen interest that I turned to the report of his opinions and convictions about the Gospel in its relation to social questions. The expression of these opinions took the form of an uncompromising attack upon the attitude of the Newspaper Press and the Christian Churches towards the labour movement. I have no concern in this address with the part of the attack which was directed against the newspapers. I have strong feelings about the influence of the Press, and the way that influence is used ; and while I

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do not commit myself to a single accusation that Mr. Hall Caine brings against those who own and conduct our great newspapers, I thank him very sincerely for handling them, as he handles the Churches, with no mailed fist.

The indictment which the popular novelist—who, I am glad to feel, has the instincts of a social reformer—formulates against the Churches is made up of at least three distinct charges. "I am sorry to say it," he remarks in the first place, "but I say it with all emphasis, that the Churches, speaking of them as a whole, and allowing for notable exceptions, have always been opposed to efforts put forward in the political interests of the people. Show me a single victory for humanity that has not been won by the people, and for the people, and often in the face of the Churches." And he rounds off his challenge by saying, "I know of none."

Now my objection to a statement like this is, that under a show of strong language it hides away a qualification which reduces the statement, the moment you come into close quarters



with it, to anything or nothing. "I say it with emphasis"—we almost catch our breath when a man begins in this fashion—"that the Churches, with a few notable exceptions, have always been opposed to the political interests of the people."

Can there not be, then, any reasonable difference of opinion, as to what the political interests of the people are? Mr. Hall Caine may regard himself as bound, in the name of God, to advance what I, in the name of God, may feel myself compelled to resist; and both of us may be honest and God-fearing men. It is one thing to oppose some political scheme; it is another thing to be opposed to the political interests of the people. It may be because a man has the latter at heart that he is obliged to do the former.

Mr. Hall Caine contends that the Churches, with a few notable exceptions, have uniformly been opposed to the political interests of the people, and that for selfish reasons. I will pass by the question of motives and ask: What are we to understand by "notable exceptions?"

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What do they include? What is their extent? I might take it upon myself to say that this congregation, with a few notable exceptions, is made up of foolish people. Apart from the impertinence of such a general assertion, I am committed to nothing. I can easily accommodate any one who prefers to be regarded as a "notable exception." I might say that the Pass at Thermopylae was undefended, if we omit a few "notable exceptions"; only you might remind me that these "notable exceptions" gave us Thermopylae. History, in its heights, and in its depths, has been made out of "notable exceptions."

How if it should happen that the moral and social progress, which we cannot credit to the Churches as a whole, has yet been won by the "notable exceptions" among the Churches? Is the drowning man any the less saved by the notable exception who risks his life to rescue him, because the crowd on the beach did not plunge into the water to render a like service? It may be true that the Churches, as a whole, have never taken any strong lead in the political

interests of the people ; but what if it can be shown that, practically, all the advantages that the people now enjoy have been won by the Churches? And I believe it can be shown. For thirty years of my life I have taken a deep interest in political questions. For the greater part of that time I gave the best of myself to further what I earnestly thought to be the political interests of the people. Before I was out of my teens I denied myself almost every apology for luxury, even to a decent change of clothes, to help on the agitation for those reforms which, we are told, the Churches have always opposed. My experience was gained, and grimly gained, as a "common factory worker" in one of the large industrial towns co-terminous with the city of Manchester. I can remember vividly the agitation for the extension of the Franchise, and the bitter opposition we had to face in England to our efforts to bring the means of intellectual education within reach of the people as a whole.

"What did the Church do," asks Mr. Hall Caine, "for the enlargement of representative

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government?" My answer, not evolved out of my consciousness, but out of my experience, is—they did everything. Had it not been for the ministers of the Free Churches of England, with their members and adherents, to all human seeming, the working classes would have been as far from the franchise at the end of last century as they were at its beginning. During the fifty years of that century in which so much political and social advance was made, the reproach of "Political Dissenter" was a serious one to sustain both in conviction and self-sacrifice. And as dissenters we were politicians almost to a man, not because we were dissenters, but because we were citizens. And if any man can challenge Mr. Hall Caine's indictment, so far as England is concerned, that man is the political dissenter. The greatness of our Empire has been derived from many sources; but it has come chiefly from the lofty and generous ideas by which the spirit of the nation has been animated, and by which its policy and legislation have been controlled. The rise, growth and development of representative institutions;

the vindication of personal liberty ; the struggles of the Puritans for ecclesiastical and political freedom ; the rapid strides made during these last few years in the establishment of citizen schools, and in opportunities of getting an education—"all of these have given visible form and expression to convictions that have ripened slowly in the mind of individuals, but which have become at length, let us trust, settled and enduring elements in our national faith and life." Count up the gains that have been won for the people since John Bright girded himself for battle against the Corn Laws ; see how one restriction after another has disappeared as the touch of justice broke the pretensions of time and power.

Take the last sixty years, a period, as touching the political interests of the people, the most historic of all our years, and I affirm that this history, for good or for evil, was made almost as a whole by the Nonconformists of Britain. Let me be clearly understood. I am not speaking as a politician to-night. I hazard no opinion whatever as to the moral quality of what,



for convenience of expression, I have called reforms. I believe that, on the whole, the Established Church in England was as sincere in its opposition to these changes as were the Non-conformists in their efforts to bring them to pass. What I do say is this: When Mr. Hall Caine asserts that, if there have been any instances when the Churches, as a whole, have not opposed popular reforms, he does not know them—then I tell him what he ought to know without telling, that these reforms were fought for and won by the men who constituted the Churches, which, with singular ineptness, he completely ignores.

In the second part of his indictment against the Churches, Mr. Caine charges them with keeping back from the people a part, and a most important part, of the message they are commissioned to preach and practise. This is what he says: "We do not say that the Gospel is nothing more than a social message; but we do say that its social message is an essential part of its message of eternal life. We do not say that Christ was a great social Reformer;

but we do say that, without being a social Reformer He would not have been Christ. We do not say, that the Churches should devote themselves exclusively to social objects ; but we do say if they ignore these questions they set aside one of the most solemn and urgent facts of the Gospel teaching. We do not say that the kingdom of God is not within ; but we do say that it cannot be within, and not sooner or later be without."

The first feeling I have on reading these sentences, is one of surprise that so acute an observer of men and things should have thought it necessary to elaborate them. I venture to say that no intelligent Christian, and no Church that is a Church, would question their doctrine for a moment. A Christian is one who manifests a life derived from, and kindred with, that of Christ ; and no man who tries to bring down and incarnate the spirit of Christ in his daily life would dream of wilfully keeping apart the two sides of the proposition set forth in these sentences I have quoted. Let us look for a moment a little more closely at the last of them.

"We do not say that the kingdom of God is not within ; but we do say that it cannot be within, and not sooner or later be without." I do not ask any man to describe the function of the Churches in more accurate terms. Get the kingdom of God, or in other words the life of God, into a man's heart, and you have that man's highest relation to society. A selfish Christian is not so much a contradiction in terms ; he, or she, is a moral impossibility. You might as well expect a man to have the kingdom of God within him, and that kingdom not work through him, as expect the potencies of spring to force their way through the fibres of the tree without changing its external appearance.

The work of the Church, by the grace of God, is to get the kingdom of God within the hearts of men, and once there, you may trust it to manifest itself without. This was what Christ sought from beginning to end of His ministry on earth. We read of a man coming to Him with some family trouble—about the division of a property. "Speak to my brother," he demanded of Christ, "that he divide the in-

heritance with me." And Christ turned upon him and said : " Who made Me a judge or a divider over you? Take heed and beware of covetousness." That is : Cast out the spirit of selfishness by bringing in overwhelmingly its opposite virtue, and your difference will speedily right itself. This is the principle of the Gospel. Get the kingdom of God into a man's heart, and you may trust him to get that kingdom into his life. And what stands in the way of this first condition of getting better men and a better world? because the whole controversy turns on this question. Is it the " misery of the world," the " shocking inequalities of wealth and poverty?" Is it the bad social and economic condition of the people, who are not so much a class as a nation? This condition may in some cases be a cause : speaking comprehensively, it is the consequence of a cause, the root-nature of which is the sin of the human heart. I know with what impatience the world turns away from this old insistence. Men like to be told that they can be changed through circumstances, and it is, as much as

ever, the offence of the Cross to tell them that the only change that can permanently change circumstances is themselves changed. Is it only a question of our economic system that explains a world like ours? Shall we never realize that the whole hell of it is not in circumstances, but in the relation of our will to the Holy Will of God? This is the reason why the world, left to itself, makes no progress, despite its endless action and re-action. The nations at large, to my thinking, are as far from governing themselves, or allowing themselves to be governed, by the laws of reason, or of God, as ever they were. It is not reformation only, but regeneration that can re-make men, and make a new world.

Yet the Churches on all sides are being importuned, by scorn, by denunciation, by every variety of provocative, to turn aside into the modern current of social religion with, or without, the spiritual change. And God forbid that they should stand aloof.

But they will surrender their distinctive mission and find in that loss no gain to match, if



they enter the arena with nothing but the commonplaces of a social creed. Anything they can do will end, at the best, in comparative failure if it be severed from its root in the gospel of Christian redemption.

<sup>1</sup> The Churches cease to be Churches, to the extent they fail to maintain their protest that the problem of sin, of personal guilt and failure, is the first, and the worst, and the nearest of all problems for each man of us and for society. A Church to be a Church must maintain her protest that the problem which most concerns us to get solved is not in outward conditions, but in the human heart; it is sin—and with this problem no one deals, or can deal, save Him who was crucified on Calvary for the sin of the world. We take Mr. Hall Caine at his word when he says that “the kingdom of God cannot be within, and not sooner or later be without”; but we say that it must be within before it can be without, and it is the work of the Churches to get it there. To blame the Churches for not taking sides in industrial

<sup>1</sup> Two or three sentences here are roughly memorized from an article by Dr. Oswald Dykes, read years ago.

troubles, and political struggles, is to blame them for not doing what they were not organized to do. For a Church to become a judge or a divider among men, is to depart from the fundamental idea of a Church and become something else. Get the kingdom of God within—in a man's heart—and you may trust him to seize every element which tends to the building up of the kingdom of God in the world outside him.

Mr. Hall Caine, in the third part of his indictment, charges the Churches with the betrayal of their Divine message in using it to uphold social inequality and economic injustice. He charges them with what is nothing less than the crime of telling the people that "the awful extravagances of the rich, and the frightful privations of the poor, are a part of the Divine ordinance, and therefore—paradoxically enough—only to be remedied by another and better existence." He charges the Churches with being ready, for selfish ends, to exploit the truth of God, and change its most sacred verities into the most odious of lies. Such a charge simply

shows that our popular novelist knows practically nothing of those Churches (and they are a multitude) which are in keen sympathy with the best democratic aspirations of the toiling masses. If it be true that "like priest like people," and to a large extent I believe it is, then I can tell Mr. Hall Caine that there are thousands of ministers like myself who find our daily heartbreak in the sodden apathy and crass indifference of the people as a whole about their political interests and social uplifting. We should just as soon think of telling them that the "shocking inequalities" in society are a "Divine ordinance" as we should think of encouraging them to blaspheme against their manhood by nameless sin and brutal licence. There is nothing I find it harder to keep and cultivate than the charity which hopeth all things, when I see, as I am obliged to see on every side, how ready and even eager our democracy are to accept any social and economic conditions so that they have drink and sport and animal indulgence in more or less abundance.

The huge breakdown to-day of the hopes and efforts of genuine reformers is the failure of the masses to rise to their opportunities, a failure for which, not Churches, not economics, but they themselves are responsible. Surely we have a right to look for some evidence of character, some assertion of will, some display of self-respect. They are men and not children. If the Churches do not help them, then let them forswear the Churches, or establish new and better ones. If the God Whom the conventional Churches worship be but a reflection of the class spirit, such worship is only the concern of those who care to indulge it.

Indeed, it would be subject for grim jest, were it not a matter unspeakably sad, to hear men represented as martyred by the neglect of the Churches, and their follies and self-defeat excused on the ground that the Churches do not somehow do for them what they will not do for themselves. The truth is that, with a few splendid exceptions—"notable exceptions," shall I say?—the overwhelming majority of the masses of the people no more want the econo-

mic ideals of the "Labour Programme" than either the classes or the masses want the distinctive message of the Church. Find them a religion that can make them sober without giving up the drink, that can give them clean lives without self-struggle, that can make them do well without ceasing to do evil, and they will accept it with acclamation. I was looking this last week at the *Letters of John Richard Green*, edited by Leslie Stephen, and what interested me most in them were the references of Green to his nine years' experience as a clergyman, toiling in some of the most typical of the working-class centres of London. Weighed upon with the sense of the utter worthlessness of his efforts, he writes: "My work here, and good men's work everywhere, is simply thrown away; men will go on betting and drinking till the flood comes." This may be but the momentary cry of ill-health and shattered illusions, but there is in it infinite pathos, and there is truth. The class which Karl Marx defines as a nation do not, to any large extent, want a land of promise that can

be entered only through aspiration, struggle, and self-sacrifice; give them the means to drink and bet, and they have no serious quarrel with what their labour leaders describe as the bondage of Egypt. In what sense indeed has the Labour Propaganda, which Mr. Hall Caine characterizes as "profoundly religious" in its nature, been more effective with the workers than the efforts of the despised Churches? However well intentioned you may be, you effect no permanent good by merely furbishing up the exterior of life.

And the time is upon us to say this with no bated breath and with no whispered humbleness. If I were less in sympathy with the workers than I am, I should not say the things I have said to-night. I am from the workers, and their hurt is my hurt when they are encouraged to put the blame of their own self-defeat either upon the Churches or upon social conditions. Neither Churches nor social conditions can do for them what they will not try to do for themselves. Until they realize the power that destroys them—the power which is

not in circumstances but in the heart ; until they are prepared to resist unto blood, striving against sin, willing to sacrifice everything that stands between their will and the Divine will—then Churches and reformers may toil for their moral and social betterment, but it will be the toil that ends in the sorrow that has no hope. I hold no brief for the Churches. I would not shield them for a moment from just criticism or deserved rebuke. As a consequence of their supreme mission the Churches must draw in every power beneath the consecration of Divine rule. If they have knowledge, they must teach it ; if they have light, they must diffuse it ; if they have zeal, they must kindle it ; if they have love, they must inspire it. “An idle Church, an indifferent Church, a self-centred Church, a mere class Church, proclaims itself at once branded with falsehood, stamped with unfaithfulness, corrupt at the very core, or else ignorant of the first purpose of its existence.”

Nothing would so flood all true Christian hearts with joy, nothing on the human side



would so reinforce the power of the Churches, like the coming of the mighty hosts of the workers to claim that Life which alone can be translated into, first the duties, and then the rights of man. "Keep your centre right in the twin-facts of sin and redemption," then describe as big a circle as possible, the bigger the better. Include labour programmes, include anything which helps to make mankind one realm, over which the law of the Saviour shall at last prevail.

# THE FACTOR OF CHARACTER

“Work out your own salvation.”

—*Philippians* ii. 12.

## II

### THE FACTOR OF CHARACTER

**I**N my former address I gave it as my conviction that one cause of the huge breakdown of the hopes and efforts of genuine reformers to-day is the failure of the masses to rise to their opportunities—a failure for which not Churches, not economics, but they themselves are responsible. I said that we had a right to look to them for some evidence of character, some assertion of will, some display of self-respect.

This contention has recently been described by a well known labour leader and member of Parliament<sup>1</sup> as “rant and nonsense, quite unworthy of a Christian minister.” “The poison in the veins of the people,” he goes on to say,

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Keir Hardy, M.P.

"is too strong to be got out by talk like this. The people are what the present industrial system, blessed by the Church and backed by the State, has made them. The old order of industrial independence and individual responsibility has passed away, and the new order which has taken its place has produced a generation suited to the new conditions. Hounded and driven at work like beasts of burden, befogged by Press and politician, taught stale and profitless platitudes from the pulpit, what is there to inspire men to do and dare?"

I shall not describe language of this kind as "rant and nonsense." I have another term to use concerning it presently. If the masses of the people do not receive a fair share of the wealth they help to produce; if crowds of them live perilously near the wrong side of enough to keep body and soul together; if they are badly housed, insufficiently fed, and wretchedly taught; if their lives are often sunless and monotonous, deprived of knowledge, or even the desire for it, by over-strain of coarse physical toil,—then to ask, "What is there to inspire

men to do and dare?" sounds very like a confession of moral imbecility. Surely there is everything, not only to inspire, but to compel men to do and dare, unless the last faintest spring of manhood has dried up and gone away from them. It is indeed talk of this kind that tells in favour of those sinister forces in our modern industrial system which have an increasing and undoubted tendency to become despotic.

Few things impress me more than the change that has come over the working classes during the last quarter of a century, in their estimate of the chances and possibilities of their lives. With some "notable exceptions" they appear to have ceased to believe in these possibilities, or they are content to let them go by default. I do not say that this is the aim of many of their new teachers, but I do say that it is to some extent the result of their teaching. "Every man," says Bebel, "is the product of his time, and an instrument of circumstances." And this is how time and circumstances are being represented to the young democracy:

"You are hounded and driven at work like beasts of burden ; you are befogged by Press and politician, taught stale and profitless platitudes from the pulpit, with no hope in this life, and a dreary monotony promised you in the hereafter ; what is there to inspire you to do and dare ?"

The modern teaching, by men who claim to speak with authority to the workers, is frankly, bitterly, and aggressively external. "It has rarely a clear word to say about change of character." All its real emphasis is, not upon what men should do for themselves, but upon what should be done for them. I have been at a score of meetings, held under the auspices of what is known as the Labour Movement, at which the "orthodox appeals," as they were sneeringly described, for the cultivation of thrift, prudence, self-help, and even sobriety were held up to ridicule and dismissed with derisive laughter. I am not saying that the qualities were ridiculed so much as the old claims for them as essential factors in any wise solution of our social problems. Strange as it

may seem, the qualities which were once recognized as virtues are now, in many quarters, not only had in suspicion, but are actually held to be hindrances to the aims of the workers. It is hardly to be wondered at, in a sense, that a few of the workers should turn to socialism, to a system that promises to do for them what they are said to be organically incapable of doing for themselves, or that the vast majority should sink into indifference and hopelessness.

Granted that these charges against our industrial system can be maintained, are the toilers, then, to regard themselves as mere cogs in a huge mechanism that grinds out too much for a few and too little for the many? We may shrink from the conclusion, but how are we to escape from it, if it be true that individual responsibility has passed away leaving behind it nothing which can inspire men to do and dare for the conditions that make life better worth living?

It is possible under a great show of sympathy to preach a social creed in the terms of a fore-ordination which dooms the non-elect of high



efficiency to the very real damnation of beggarly dependence, or of endless failure in the battle of life. The perversion of the best is the worst, especially in the matter of sympathy. The friends of the toiling masses are not they who preach to them only their wrongs, even when they are real ; who thereby remind them of their weakness, and supply them with the deadly opiate of self-pity. The workers have been told of their weakness long enough ; they need to be persuaded of their strength. And he is their friend who insists upon the severity which in every life is the sign-manual of its uplifting and hope. It is quite true that we have to reckon with forces that we do not choose and cannot control. But we can choose to the extent of responsibility, whether these forces shall make us, or whether we will use the forces to make ourselves. Character, or manhood, without which nothing great is possible, is not a "product of legislation, it is not a deduction of knowledge, it is not the fruit of experience"—it is the content of our endowment put out to full advantage through grace and will. Every man

worthy to be called a man has in him some promise of the gradual supremacy of character over the accidents, happenings, forces and factors of circumstances. These may be his tests, but they need not be his fate. Manhood should be helped by circumstances, but not made by them. It is when manhood ceases to use circumstances that circumstances destroy manhood. A man has to raise himself—if he rise in any worthy sense—with or without any conscious help from Church or religion. Character-building is stern work, but he is the only friend of man or men who insists that nothing can be put in its place. Character has at times to seem a relentless thing, like the life it illuminates: "Savage, cold and bare, but infinitely strong." The famous saying of Novalis, that "Character is destiny," needs qualification, but it points in the right direction. Like most great truths, it contains more than it can convey.

Let men have all the help society can give them. Let it be the aim of the State to make it as hard as possible for its citizens to go wrong, and as easy as it can be made for them to do

right. Let us cover the frail and easily tempted with the mantle of a gracious charity ; and uphold the weak and heavily handicapped with a tender and wise sympathy. But, I repeat, keep the two sides of the essential proposition together. Insist upon it that the radical change must be first man himself changed, and withal put everything in his way to induce the change and secure its permanence. Let us demand better housing, healthier surroundings, purer air, and sanitary conditions perfect as we can get them. Let the people claim their own of the untold wealth which, as unearned increment, is now diverted into personal and selfish channels. Let this wealth produced by the many be used for the many in securing equality or opportunity for getting an education, with time enough at it to carry it past the drudgery stage, which is really the defeat of our present system. No money is so well spent as that which is spent in making men and women. Spare nothing that would build up a man's body, enrich his mind, and help to fortify his moral nature. All this, however, can

come to pass but to the extent that each man contributes his individual salvation to the collective good. You cannot get a perfect whole out of imperfect parts. The State is not some mysterious entity, as far apart from our volitions and responsibilities as are the movements of the heavenly bodies. Multiply you and me sufficiently and you have the State. What we are, so is the State. You may furbish up the exterior of human life as you like, it will be at the best but shoddy reform in the measure that you attempt to put anything in the place of manhood. You cannot get your revolution by return of post, much less character. You have to deal with a very complex human nature, and the only chance of success in the problem of its uplifting, is to work through the personal equation. That Edenic story is not told for nothing if it but force the reflection that, when Adam fell, it was not in a slum, but in the Garden of Paradise. It was not with poison in his veins amid vicious surroundings, it was amid conditions perfect as the fashioning hand of the Almighty could make them. As the life

which is wisely lived goes on, chance, whether of heredity or environment, becomes less and less, and character more and more. "The correspondence between our spirits and our fortunes becomes more obvious, until fate is submerged in character." It is necessary to face the truth which sooner or later must confront us: we make or mar ourselves, we are the masters of our real fate or fortune.

It has been remarked that men who have been reformers themselves are often the least tolerant of new movements they do not like, and the directions of which they possibly do not understand. And it may be that I, who was sent into the factory years before I was in my teens, to make one of a gang of lads overseered by a man whose employment it was to get the most out of us by a physical violence, which was determined only by the accident of his temper—it may be that I do not understand the "new industrial system"; it may be that I do not know how to sympathize with men who are so "used up in it that they have lost courage to hope and heart to struggle." I have, however,

been a close observer of this system for many years. I know its developments, and I affirm that there is nothing essential to it which cannot be modified, safe-guarded, and brought under the influence of just and humane conditions. The labouring classes have the power by thought and combination to eliminate the evil in it, and bring out all the good. They have given some hint of their power in the co-operative movement ; and there is no reason that ought not to cease to be a reason why, by mutual trust and determination, they should not come to their own. During the present generation they could go far to bring about a revolution in our industrial system as peaceful as it would be beneficent, and as beneficent as it would be righteous.

I can sympathize deeply with the men and women whose years and responsibilities place them at the mercy, or want of it, of some of the more recent and ugly features of this system.

But I am made angry, and I do well to be angry, with our young men who should be the hope, and are become all but the despair, of our

democratic aspirations and ideals. They are at the age when they can afford, as never again in their lives, to take the risks every reformer must accept, and with which every path-finder must reckon. What are the young men doing to equip themselves for the sacred and mighty task, not of pulling those above them down, but of lifting their own order up? It used to be held, as some one has said, that the ideas which were striving in democracy—the ideas which constitute its highest justification—are the ideas that lie at the heart of religion, that “God is no respecter of persons,” that every man should have the opportunity to make the best of himself; that men should be honoured for what they are, rather than for what they have; that we are our brother’s keeper.” What hold have these ideas upon our modern, and especially the young, democracy? If you reckon off a comparatively few exceptions, in what do you find the average young artizan interest himself, beyond pursuits that have often the same relation to his moral and economic advantage that fever germs have to his physical health? I should be the last to

question, and the first to assert his right to the legitimate pleasures of his years. A denunciation of pleasure, harmless in itself, does not always mean an "ignorant hatred of what no one but a narrow moralist would call harmful." Sometimes it means an exceedingly enlightened hatred of what no one but a narrow moralist would call harmless. I expect little from the older men and women who have set in present conditions, and whose chances and circumstances leave them hardly any alternative but to worry through to the end as best they can. Our hope should be in the younger men. But what shall we say of a young democracy that has ceased to read? What shall we hope from young men who are as ignorant as babies about the political and social questions that so vitally affect the welfare of their order? What have we to expect from young men who are content, so that they have some other things, just to repeat the sordid, hap-hazard existence of those who have gone before them? What shall we hope from young men with whom the "drink-club takes the place of the lecture-room, the book-maker the place



of the teacher, and the sporting newspaper the place of a useful book."

"The poison in the blood," we are told, "made by the system under which they exist and toil, makes all this moral surrender next to inevitable." From whatever source, or by whatever process, the workers have come to believe, they *have* come to believe in overwhelming numbers that man is constituted by what he inherits in the first place, and then by the environment into which his lot is cast. That one rises and another falls, is as much a chance as the falling of the dice. The young man is not likely to count for much whose instinctive moral recoil is not its own answer to this miserable teaching. It is the vilest heresy of which man can be guilty, to suggest to young people either poison in the blood, or any other excuse, for the wilful abnegation of the power to lift themselves, and through themselves the class to which they belong. He is the true friend to young men who tells them that they can raise themselves if they will, and if they will not, neither God nor Churches can help them.

There is nothing necessarily in the present industrial system which can rob a man of the character he is determined to keep and cultivate. And there is no conceivable system which can impute or give character to a man who will sacrifice no lower part of himself to win the higher.

To say that this industrial system crushes out all inspiration to do and dare, is to overlook the experience of three-fourths of the men who have won success in it. Go where you will the world over, and you will find Scotchmen who have risen from the humblest surroundings giving, on the whole, a worthy account of themselves. No nation for its size has better shown how character and achievement can be built up, not only in spite of hard circumstances, but because of them. And even where the success is not very declarative to others, a man may have bread to eat the world knows not of. Many a man, if asked the secret, not of his content, but of his upright and even cheerful endurance in a life of toil and bitter struggle, will tell you in words I read the other day, and which I have often heard re-

peated in another form, "My faith in God makes me able to do my work. It rescues from narrowness and hopelessness, and gives me persistence from day to day. It preserves for me the larger view of my duty, and sustains me when my immediate results are sadly meagre and small." In a word, he will tell you that what he is, not what he has, stands between him and overwhelming weariness of social despair. It is in himself that he finds the freedom which the spirit craves, that final emancipation from the forces it does not choose and cannot control, which marks the maturity of true development. And until the people realize that their social salvation is in their own hands, so long as they plead their blood to cheat their will, so long as they expect society to do for them what they make no effort to do for themselves, then we must be content to accept one more cycle of profitless experience with no gain to the race.

"The old order of industrial independence has passed away," we are told again, "leaving no room in the new order for individual re-

sponsibility and display of character." It is the same fallacy, that the system makes the men, not the men the system. I have tasted something of the bitterness of the struggle by which the old order has, to a large extent, been broken, and might be splendidly avenged were the workers sufficiently alive to their own interests to develop the best possibilities in the new system, and guard against the dangers that are inherent in it, as in all human institutions. We are frequently told that in spite of all our vaunted social improvements the rich are becoming richer and the poor are getting poorer. This may be true of the rich, but it is true of the poor only because the standard of riches and poverty alike has been heightened. The position of the temperate and industrious artizan to-day is that of considerable affluence compared with the wages, purchasing powers, chances, and homes of the workers fifty years ago. If the poor are getting poorer it is relatively to some few in the other classes, it is not in the sense we once meant when we used the word "poverty." Let us take a

sample of what was almost chronic under the old order of "industrial independence." On December 13, 1841, the local medical men testified that "owing to the high price of food, and want of employment, the labouring classes of the borough of Rochdale and its neighbourhood are suffering appalling privations." "Misery," said a then rising statesman, speaking for a deputation sent to London on the subject of Free Trade, "is to be seen in the house of every poor man. Haggard destitution and extreme poverty are the most prominent things in his family. The consequence is that discontent so prevails that scarcely a working man will lift a finger in defence of those institutions which Englishmen were wont to be proud of. Not even the monarchy is safe under a state of things that would blast fairest prospects and destroy the most powerful nation that ever existed."

We should expect little in an industrial system of this description to call forth a heroism which is said to be impossible in ours. And yet that awful strain brought out the strength

of perhaps the most effective and far-reaching legislation of the great nineteenth century. It roused the workers as never since to do and dare in the face of starvation, prison, and even death for what their manhood instinctively recognized as the first rights of a life-rent of this world. Men are more easily destroyed by too much than by too little. Our fathers succeeded only too well. Had they left us more to do in some directions, we should be a more earnest people to-day. The unprecedented prosperity of the last half century has been used, in a large degree, so as to take the moral grit and progressive ambition out of masses and classes alike. If you notice the history of what is called the Reform Movement, say from 1780, when it first took definite shape, until now, you will find that the driving-power of the democracy could only be relied upon in times of bad trade and straightened circumstances. The return of better trade has invariably meant an increased drink-bill, the growth of the betting curse, and undue indulgence in sport and pleasure. Instead of

prosperity being used as the basis of a bigger and better prosperity, it is too often used to weaken the good and strengthen the bad in the individual and in the community.

To blame our industrial system for the present and admitted failure of the great masses of the people to rise to their opportunities is like blaming knowledge because a man will not take the pains to acquire it. The system is what men make it. Were we to think and act like rational beings, it would be what God intended it to be, a mighty instrument for distributing wealth, intelligence, and comfort. Unless men will think, and submit to the self-discipline which is the condition of all real power, the system will do what it is allowed to do to-day, it will rule the men who ought to rule the system. One thing is inevitable, the workers must either be its masters or its slaves.

In closing this address I have to say again that I do not willingly say the things I have permitted myself to say. I dwell in sympathy with my own people, and they are the workers.

When I think of what they might be by the help of God and themselves, as compared with what they are, I know what St. Paul meant when he said of his brethren and kinsmen : "I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart." I am charged in the article to which I have referred with being "an accuser of the masses." Every man must be the judge of his own motives ; and if he feels that there are times when it is more necessary to accuse than to excuse, in the measure of his conviction must he take the old stand—"I can do no other." Character is the root of all reform ; and it is because I believe this that I have, so far, without regard for repetition or sequence, rung the changes of this address on its insistence. As there is a kind of soul that never feels the significance of life so there is a state of mind that excludes the chances of life. Thoughtlessness and indifference far surpass economic wrongs in the production of bad social conditions. As nothing but a thoughtful spirit will open to man the gates of learning, and show him the splendour of the gains of time,



so nothing but a self-reliant and reverential character will open the gates of economic resources and reveal the duties and the rights of humanity. I believe that the working classes are fatally neglecting opportunities they never had before and may not soon have again. The drug of a little temporary prosperity has been administered to them, and, while they sleep, the tares of reaction are being sown to an extent they little realize. It is the old truth: "From him that hath not shall be taken away, even that which he hath." And the teacher of religion, Christian or any other, does his age an ill service who encourages men to put anything in the place of character grounded in will and built up in effort. My stand is where thought and experience have forced me. From human nature left to itself I hope for nothing, with that nature re-made in Christ I despair of nothing. It all turns on the re-make. First life, then the light.

THE NATURE OF THE WEAKNESS

All we like sheep have gone astray."

—*Isaiah* liii. 6

### III

#### THE NATURE OF THE WEAKNESS

THE passage in which the words occur is undoubtedly part of the literature of the Bible. It reaches the loftiest standard we have in the Old Testament of poetry, prophecy, and power. Hence words are not used carelessly. When we read, "All we like sheep have gone astray," we instinctively pause over this figure, or whatever be the accurate term by which to describe it. It is not written, "All we like wolves, like tigers," but, "all we like sheep have gone astray." We do not usually associate the thought of something so silly, so whimsical, so essentially harmless as a sheep with the awful deeps and disobediences of the human heart.

In this assertion of the prophet there is not

so much as a hint of hereditary tendencies forcing themselves into uncontrollable action, of innate devilry in men manifesting itself in a species of Satanic concert; it simply amounts to a matter of pitiable moral weakness. Like sheep, like simpletons, have we gone astray. Whether he is right or wrong, this is what the writer says. And it is worth our while to think, to take in the fact, that the prophet-poet uses the word "sheep" in this highly wrought passage, rather than some word that connotes a very different force, as in tiger, wolf, or snake. If we settle it in our mind that men in large numbers go wrong, not because they must and cannot help it, but because they are fools and will not help it, the conviction may not do much for our natural conceit, but it will probably serve a useful purpose in a more important direction.

Because this is the very opposite of what we are encouraged to believe to-day. The reason, we are told, why men do certain things and follow hurtful paths is not folly but fate. That one man works out his salvation, and another his damnation, is not the wisdom of one nor

the foolishness of the other, it is the necessity of both. It is the accident of having brains and will, or not having them. <sup>1</sup> The theory, ~~for example, as it has been said,~~ which has heredity and the accumulation of heredity as one of its essential levers, has taken possession of the popular mind and imagination as never before perhaps in the history of thought. "It has fixed attention on the law in its purely physical aspects, and has made men feel more keenly the difficulty of giving it a moral interpretation consistent with individual freedom."

The workers are in contact almost daily with this rude handling of the most serious problems; as a consequence multitudes of them have one article in a creed that now appeals to them as beyond challenge: "We are what we are and must be, because those of whom we came were what they were."

This goes far to explain the change that has come over the working classes during the last quarter of a century in their estimate of the chances and possibilities of their lives. In the

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Denney.

little schooling that fell to my lot, I was fortunate for a few months to come under the influence of a thoroughly high type of a man who recognized his obligations as a teacher to all sides of our nature. Hardly a lesson passed which he did not use as an opportunity to rub in some phase of our duty to God and ourselves. His unwearied insistence was, that self-effort and utter truthfulness, or the absence of these, always explain men and their circumstances. About two years ago this good man got together all his old scholars who were above ground and within reach, and it was remarkable how few gaps thirty years had made in the ranks of those who gladly, and with every demonstration of genuine affection, met to do honour to their old schoolmaster. I could not be present, but one of the company writing me after said: "You would have been pleased to see what a prosperous lot we looked, almost without exception. Not one of us has failed to give some account of himself; while many have attained positions of considerable importance; others have achieved comparative wealth."

Yet there was not a lad in that school who did not come from a home where the fourth part of a shilling for "school-wage" was not a serious consideration. But teaching which helped to make men of this order is now, almost entirely, brushed aside as having no relation to modern conditions. Industrial life, we are told, has reached a degree of complexity in which the individual worker is little more than a cog in a huge machine. He has about as much power to alter things by his character as the vessel has power to say to the potter, "Why hast thou made me thus?"

What the workers need to brace them up and enable them to wrestle with and throw the essential lie in all this, is first, thought, and then self-dependence. It is quite true, as I have already said, that we have to reckon with forces we do not choose and cannot control. Life is made not by choosing circumstances but by using them.

Let any sensible working man argue the case for himself in thought of some of these modern theories. Let him say, as unfortunately many



a man can say: "My father failed, and failed lamentably, to make anything of worth out of his life. He took to drink, he began to forsake his home, to neglect his work, and gradually became a misery to himself and to all who had to do with him. This is the accumulation of consequences in me; this is the history it is my fate to repeat." Let a man say: "I am merely an incident in the industrial system. I am, in fact, a wage-slave. I can leave my work and starve, or I can grind at it, as much a part of the mechanism, so far as my individuality is concerned, as the engine that drives the wheels."

In each case the circumstances, or facts, may be as stated, but each man knows that the inference from the facts is an insult to his manhood. His instinctive insurrection against the inference is its own answer to the miserable doctrine so industriously preached in the name of science. I have known workers in days that are past, I know like men to-day, who, despite inheritances that never fail to report themselves, despite the hardness of their surroundings, and the depressing nature of their toil, are *men*—great men in

the sight of God, and in the estimation of those who know them best. Their thoughts save them from allowing their toil to degrade their soul. And it is the man who thinks himself away and above the dangerous influences of his surroundings, who is the true reformer. He makes the men of his class about him feel that they are sheep and not men, to be fooled by teaching they so little understand ; sheep and not men, to be persuaded either by themselves or others, that circumstances can ever be a valid excuse for making the worst and not the best of things. Such a man does much to maintain the protest that thought is greater than things ; that while we may have to bow for a time to forces we cannot control, we bow to them only that we, or those who come after us, may conquer them in the end.

Out of thought will come a greater force or true independence. It has always impressed me as a singular weakness in the masses of the people that they display so little independence of the classes outside them, and practically no dependence on the resources of their own order.

The men who appreciate the value of labour representatives like Thomas Burt and John Burns are too rarely found among the workers. There are crowds of the latter who would not have penalized themselves to the extent of a half-pint of beer in the week to have secured for Mr. Gladstone a living wage. How is it with a fairly democratic franchise, that while you have a hundred men at least in Parliament to look after the interests of the drink traffic, you can count the representatives of labour on the fingers of one pair of hands? Were the working men half alive to their own interests they would have a solid phalanx of their own order in the House of Commons, that would render the State a splendid service by making the representatives of wealth and the privileged classes, realize the gravity of the new economic temper which is growing in volume and intensity every day. These representatives of labour would also receive, and transmit to the workers, larger ideas and more intelligent conceptions of the just rights of the classes and interests outside themselves.

I instance that matter of labour representation, because it is the most obvious commentary on the inertness that prevails almost throughout the working classes. They have something like a constitutional hatred of responsibility, and the thought that responsibility compels. I have seen scores of young men in the factory who, by a little thought, a little sacrifice of time given to worthless pursuits, might have fitted themselves for another class of industry which would have changed their rank from unskilled to skilled workers, and they shrank from it as from physical torture. Every real friend of the workers knows how much defeat is wrapped up in the blunt but expressive formula: "We cannot be bothered." This apathetic, this "cannot be bothered" temper of the masses is a mighty force on the side of some of the most malignant institutions in society. By shrinking from thought and responsibility have they become the sport of the cunning craftiness of men who live and wanton on the exploitation of ethical limpness and collective folly.

But, on the other hand, we must not overlook

the encouragement there is in the thought that men in masses go wrong, not for the sheer devilry of it but often from moral cowardice, not from bad hearts but from thoughtless heads. There are human devils, and there are bad hearts in all classes alike. The suggestion, however, that we get in the text opens up what has been called a <sup>1</sup> "new psychology of reform." It is the influence that comes through an example and leadership which every good man and every good woman may and ought to exercise. If this new Calvinism taught in the name of science be true; if men go down, or fail to rise, from necessity rather than from choice; if every man is the product of his time, and an instrument of circumstances, then there is nothing more to be said: why kick against the pricks?

This writer in the book of Isaiah sounds another note, and it is the note of the Bible as applied to multitudes: "All we like sheep have gone astray." Like sheep—hence the quality in the multitudes, which tempts them down to the lower levels, makes them also susceptible to loftier

<sup>1</sup> Rev. Dr. Aked.

ones. I believe that the tide of moral indifference, which in our day is sweeping over our sterner ideals and democratic aspirations, can be made to turn and flow with the same force in the opposite direction. The masses have gone astray, not as wolves and tigers with ferocious instinct and cruel purpose, but like sheep silly and thoughtless—like sheep that can yet be brought back. One sheep in fright or frolic begins to run, the rest follow; it is almost entirely a question of example or leadership. So it is with the crowd. And the Churches would go far to solve the social problem could they supply the multitudes with examples and leaders. We need men who know their class, and “can use their social instinct for imitation, and turn it into a blessing and not a curse.” It is with the workers as with all classes, they trust less in principles than they do in the men who are supposed to voice them as leaders. We have recently seen in English politics how a transcendent personality has exhausted the community it created. Great popular enterprises have often to pay dearly for the success of their leaders. After a sphere and spell of splen-

did activity comes the inevitable end, and, as it has been remarked, while the adversary is casting lots for the prophet's mantle, the weaker brethren are wailing over his tomb. God knows we have need of another giant to say the synthetic word that can recover our faltering energies and set them to a definite end.

But, after all, the "power in the world is the power over the world," and it is not giants we need so much as a race of strong, sane, believing men of deep purpose among the workers themselves. "Mere democracy," says Ibsen, "will not and cannot solve the social question. An element of aristocracy must be introduced into our lives." By aristocracy, Ibsen does not mean birth, or pride, or privilege. He means an aristocracy of mind and will—in a word, of character. We need an order of men from the workers, each one of whom shall become a centre of moral strength far as his influence extends. We need men who are determined to do all that men can do to make a sober democracy. It is useless to expect any genuine forward movement among the workers while

drink blocks the way. I need not speak of the disastrous effects of indulgence in strong drink on society as a whole. These are incarnated in horrors, look where we will. Drink touches a deeper stratum of character than is usually seen in its physical consequences. I was talking some time ago with a very intelligent man, a member of a community of men and women, who years ago left what is called civilization, to found a colony based upon socialistic principles. "How do you manage about such matters as drink, for example?" I asked him. "We manage by doing without it altogether," was his emphatic answer. "Apart altogether from its grosser effects," he went on to say, "drink, like opium, is a soporific which deadens men's aspirations and confuses the real issues of life." It was an answer true to my experience of many men who have been lost to the good causes of the world. Drink always tends to relax a man's mental and ethical strenuousness. It begins with a kind of sociability, which inevitably takes the grit out of his convictions, leaving him with a



few shabby opinions that do not count. You can rarely trust a man who temporizes with drink to sustain the hatreds that are necessary to a true reformer. Whatever the classes may do, the masses cannot compromise with this huge social trouble, and lift themselves. It must be the first to go, and until it is gone the reformer may as well expect to gather grapes of thorns and figs of thistles as expect any radical betterment in the condition and chances of the industrial classes. As a nation, we have to conquer drunkenness or be conquered by it, and we have no more time to lose. I do not speak as an abstainer, or even as a religious man. It has become a question of sheer self-preservation. If the masses of the people are to work out their own salvation, they must make it as costly to the character and reputation of one of their own order to be a known drunkard as it is now to the reputation of a man in the other classes. They must cease to laugh at the drunken man as though he were no more than a harmless joke. He is an atrocious, and, as a rule, a deliberate offence against everything that rightly enters

into life to live ; and society ought to punish both the drunkard and his accessories as persons guilty of serious crime against social order. They must also cast away with contempt the half-apology for drunkenness found in the common-place fallacy that, poverty " is as much the cause of this evil as its consequence." If thirty years' close contact with the people may count for experience, then I testify that where I have seen one man driven to drink by poverty, I have seen a score brought to poverty through drink.

Then there is the curse—for curse it has become—of betting. It is hard to say where it is not to be found. The multiplication and enormous sale of sporting papers, which are for the most part subservient to betting and gambling transactions ; the admission of the latest odds into even high-class journals ; the revelations of the Stock Exchange and whispers of business men, all bear witness to the diffusion of an evil which is insidious and demoralizing. Insidious, because it comes to us gilded with pleasure in our moments of relaxation ; demoralizing, because with festering growth it saps a

man's better nature, and is all but impossible to shake off when once it has taken firm hold. As a primary cause of social and moral ruin betting runs drinking exceedingly close. The great and comparatively recent increase of betting among the working classes, and unfortunately among their wives and children, is a development of this dread habit strongly emphasized by competent witnesses before the recent House of Lords Committee on betting. One of these witnesses stated in his evidence that, between the hours of 11.55 and 6.15 a bookmaker was seen to negotiate 236 bets from men, women, and children in South Shields. This was sworn to in court by a policeman.

It is waste of time to ask, and it is abuse of time to discuss the question, wherein the wrong, or evil, of betting consists. The practice has evil consequences, and evil consequences only ; and they become the more evil the more widely it is diffused throughout society. What other proof of wrong does a right-minded person ask ? "My estimate of the effects of betting on character is such that I would neither employ

nor trust any man who is addicted to it." This is the testimony of one whose knowledge of working men is probably unsurpassed by any man living.<sup>1</sup> He further says : " I have observed that where gambling has increased, intellectual movements have decreased. Lads of bright intellect, who might have made the world better, are drawn into the vortex of this madness and develop low cunning instead of character. They become moral and intellectual wrecks."

Then, again, we have the sin of impurity. It is difficult to speak about this, but it is more difficult to exaggerate its importance. Impurity is the root of much of the moral failure of our modern democracy. In the textile factories of Lancashire and Yorkshire, where the sexes are brought so closely into contact ; and at large industrial concerns, where only men and boys are employed, evil speech, which is the provocative of evil deed, used to prevail, and I am told does so yet, to an appalling extent. There are creatures whose very thought and word seems to turn to filth ; and where their talk is unre-

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Robert Knight, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

strained either by education or regard for character, their power to contaminate, especially among the young, is almost without limit. I have known employers who were quick to mark iniquity of this kind, wherever it came under their notice. But, generally speaking, the foul-mouthed people are amenable to nothing but the indignation of their fellow-workers. When the sanctity of a young soul is broken down, the way is open for almost everything that worketh abomination and maketh a lie. This explains many things, the causes of which we are apt to seek elsewhere.

Then, once more, we have the class spirit among the workers to an extraordinary degree. If any one would know how this quality can wither up all pretence to humanity, let him watch the bearing of many a skilled workman to the common labourer. For a man to meet with neglect from those above him in the social scale does not greatly affect him ; he expects nothing else. But for one of his own order to play the paltry superior because he has a bit more skill and a bigger wage, or because his

skill has had a better chance, is a slight that rankles deeply.

It is the task of the more intelligent and high-minded workers to bring in a better state of things. It must be done among themselves. There is no need comparable with the need of men from among the workers who have conquered these evils in themselves, and who by example and leadership hearten their fellows to wage and win the same good fight. It all comes back to the moral question, and he who can best help others to realize this, best helps them to work out their own salvation. They must not only stand by one another as men of a class within a class, they must become ethical and moral centres, from which shall radiate self-sacrificing help to the prisoners of poverty who have lost heart and courage ; and to the creatures who, like sheep, have gone astray in thoughtlessness and folly.

For a long time to come there will be those who by drunkenness, idleness, and shiftlessness, have fallen below normal classification ; and care should be taken as they die off that they

are not repeated. We work best when we hope most, and our hope is in the young and rising democracy. I am persuaded that if we had one man of intelligence and character in every workshop, who was in earnest to do a brother's part to the young men about him, the influence of it on the immediate future would be incalculable. Ours is a day when almost every fad is represented by a society ; when selfishness in some of its most dangerous forms is organized to a fine art. Why cannot these men organize for a higher purpose? Why cannot they form themselves into a brotherhood of artisans, bound by more than masonic vows to the high chivalry of raising their own order, with or without the help of the other classes? Why cannot the workers persuade themselves that it is not more political power they need, so much as the determination to make use of the enormous power they have? Why do they not cultivate a class-consciousness which, because it fosters self-respect, commands it? Why cannot men, who are subject to the same physical and industrial chances and evils of their fellows show by example that while

these are grim realities, they are not the master ; that man is the master in the measure of his mind, and will, and self-control. On the human side, it is through nothing else but personal character acting on personal character that the workers will do, and dare, and achieve in the faith which says :

“The end lies hid in future victory,  
Won by the faithfulness of man to man.”

It will be seen that throughout this address I have said little about the distinctively religious side of this subject. The religion is in the subject itself. Let a man realize his need, and I will trust religion to take care of itself. Let him undertake the work of self-uplifting, and he will find the need of a strength not himself and greater than himself ; a need that will voice itself in the cry of that old extremity,—  
“Lord save, or I perish.”





## THE "UNREACHED MAJORITY"

“Why is the house of God forsaken?”

—*Nehemiah* xiii. 11

## IV

### THE "UNREACHED MAJORITY"

THE relation of the working classes to the Churches has been a matter of debate and anxiety ever since I can remember anything at all. That little or nothing new can be said about it does not absolve us from the attempt to say something. The relation of the working classes to the Churches has become that of all but entire alienation. The Churches, as organized forms of Christianity, have practically lost what little hold they ever had upon the masses of our industrial population. To the overwhelming majority of this population the Churches do not exist. I shall venture no figures. For one thing the term or description "working man" is very elastic, while the task of finding out the extent of his acquaintance with

a place of worship is beset with difficulties. That the extent, as evidenced by his church-going, is very small, is unhappily but too notorious.

Things have not improved in this direction during the last quarter of a century ; without controversy, they have gone back. Out of two hundred men—mostly well paid, and for their class above the average intelligence—employed at the mill in which I spent my youth, not more than a half-dozen of them had the least apparent interest either in Churches or the truths they were understood to represent. Take at a venture any ship-yard, iron-works, or company of genuine artizans to be found in Glasgow, and try to find out how many of them have even the apology for an interest in what used to be called the “ means of grace.” I do not envy the feelings of any man over the result, in the measure that he hopes for the survival of Christianity as the living force of the future.

I am sometimes appalled to see how apathetic many of the Churches appear to be in face of what is verily their cardinal defect. Either they

seem almost, as a whole, to have lost interest in the moral and spiritual welfare of the masses, or to have abandoned in despair all attempt to solve the problem of their uplifting and redemption.

One would think, apart from the higher question of man's relation to God, and the interests of his immortal being, that the very outlook for the future as a nation would compel the anxiety of thoughtful men concerning this widespread indifference about the Churches, as sources of moral and religious influence. [The only people who now habitually attend a place of worship are the lower and upper middle classes ; and even their attendance is rapidly becoming, first half-day, and then arbitrary and intermittent.] When we consider what is called society, the people who represent fashion, social influence, and the caste spirit, things, I am told, are quite as bad as they are at the other extreme. This society is made up largely of men and women who would be surprised to know that the other classes looked to them for an example, either in the fear of God, or a religious regard for the

Sabbath day. I noted some time ago the words of one who is said to be a shrewd observer, and who knows society in all its phases, and this is what he says : " We are living in an age of decadence, and we pretend not to know it. There is not a feature wanting, though I cannot mention the worst of them. We are Romans of the worst period, given up to luxury and effeminacy, and the worship of money." This decadence has told in an extraordinary degree upon a democracy which has always shown itself to be strangely susceptible to the levity and extravagance of the upper classes.

This social instinct for imitation has, for the present, set in the direction of a curse and not a blessing. Just, for example, as sport with the upper classes has lost its manliness, so in the lower is it made very largely a vehicle of betting and loafing.

But I am persuaded that there is a time at hand which is to be one of rebuke. Already the shadow of a depressed trade is beginning to gather in the land ; and it will mean more than it has ever meant before. The masses, always

thoughtless and reactionary in prosperity, are now in a position to be bitter and dangerous in adversity. A man need be neither prophet nor prophet's son to perceive that the day is within measurable distance when the present surface distinctions in politics under the names of Liberalism and Conservatism, will be differences of the past. It requires little acumen to see that men are gradually but surely—and the pace will quicken—ranging themselves grimly on one or the other of two tremendous sides—with those who have, and those who have not.

This is the true explanation of the present balance of English political parties. And unless the Churches rouse themselves, and that speedily, to grapple with the thoughtlessness and irreligion of our times, nothing can save Britain from the desperate alternative of despotism, as her only escape from a worse thing. He who can look with unconcern upon the ever widening gulf between the people and the Churches, so far from being a Christian, is not even a patriot. God is not mocked; and no nation is indispensable to Him, which can



neglect in contempt or indifference the dynamics of character that may be, and ought to be, found in Divine worship.

What then is the cause, or what are the reasons for this all but entire breakdown between the Churches and the working classes?

This question has been variously answered by many, who have applied themselves very seriously to this great social and religious problem. Practically, the answers, which lengthen out with investigation, so far amount to these: First, indifference; second, unbelief; third, exhaustion, and craving on the Sunday for sleep and bodily rest; fourth, a desire for recreation; fifth, reluctance to occupy free seats, and inability to pay high pew-rents; sixth, the cliqueism and social snobbery to be found in so many of our Churches; and lastly, the impression that the Churches represent wealth and the classes, and are therefore opposed to labour and the masses.

These, in brief, are some of the alleged reasons why working men, as a body, do not attend our places of worship. And each reason

counts for something ; but what I know of these men from the inside, convinces me that indifference tells for more than the rest put together.

Working men, we are often told, are not infidels, whether they do, or do not, attend a church ; they have no sympathy, it is said, with unbelief. I have been present at a few representative conferences, when the question "how to reach the masses?" has been in anxious debate. Generally at these functions we have one or two fervent evangelists who momentarily stir the blood of the brethren by a glowing recital of triumphs in this difficult work. They tell how they have attracted the working men ; broken their opposition and conquered their prejudices by a plain and direct presentation of the "simple Gospel." I honour these men, but I receive their description of the *personnel* of their audiences with care.

Analyse the character of one of them, and very probably you will find that it is composed of people who are nothing if not saved in their own estimation. I am told on good authority

that the "Evangelistic Campaign," recently waged under the auspices of the Free Church Council in England, made no impression whatever on the artizan classes.

Nor is it religion only, as represented by our Churches, which finds its paralysis in this deep-seated indifference. Thirty to forty years ago the doctrines of Secularism, as taught by Mr. George Jacob Holyoake, and brilliantly set forth in a more advanced form by Mr. Charles Bradlaugh, had considerable hold upon the working men, especially in the north of England. These secularists were for the most part among the more thinking, thrifty, and skilled workers ; men who rendered good service in the stirring movements of their day. That movement now, as an organized form of antagonism to Christianity, is, if not dead, fast dying out. The passion which once characterized it has been taken over and utilized by the socialists. There are people who see in this rise and fall of secularism the undeniable evidence that unbelief has no radical hold upon the masses of the people. I should find more comfort in the disappearance of this phase

of unbelief if I could see that these men were forcing their way through negation to the affirmations of Christian faith. It would be to me as the day-spring from on high to see men as earnest to affirm as I have seen them eager to deny. But at any time I would rather have a man conscientiously hostile to Christianity, than just indifferent about it altogether. I would far prefer to risk my chances for Christianity with a thinking infidelity than I would with an utter unconcern about the postulates of either belief or unbelief. The man who can think himself into anything, can think himself out of it, if need be. About the only hopeless drift of man or men is into indifference. (The century which is the most hopelessly diseased is not that which is passionate in error, but that which is simply indifferent about truth and error alike.) There is, as it has been said, vitality, and consequently hope, where violence is seen; but when all movement has ceased, when the pulse no longer beats, and the heart has become cold, can we fail to recognize the signs of approaching dissolution? This is almost the condition

which vast multitudes have reached in their relation to the churches. It is a relation of indifference.

The concerns of the Churches, including their characteristic and distinctive message, are as foreign to these men's lives as the rites of Isis. It is an indifference more marked in our large industrial centres than in communities where religious agencies have a nearer and more obvious grip. But, speaking comprehensively, the huge toiling multitudes are, for the present, lost to the Churches, and it is to trifle with our intelligence to ignore this hideous truth or try to explain it away.

This indifference, however, while it explains much, also itself needs explanation. It is only a cause in appearance, in reality it is the consequence of a cause. For the moment we think, we realize that we have the question back upon our hands: what is the cause, or what are the causes of this deep-seated and wide-spread indifference? Why is the house of God forsaken? Why are the masses so unconcerned about the things that belong to their peace? It is easy

to ask the question, it is tremendously difficult to answer it. Just as there is nothing in the world unrelated, so the answer to one aspect of the question is but to suggest another. If I venture to indicate three reasons for this indifference, it is with the feeling that I am groping for an answer, rather than the assurance that I have one.

I explain it in the first place as a kind of inheritance. I do not use the word in its ordinary acceptation. If I could find some term that denotes a force between inheritance as a natural law, and example as a moral influence, I would use it. There are thousands of homes, I had almost said, in Glasgow where the parents on the father's side have had no connexion with Churches for two or three generations back; and where mothers have severed what connexion they had as the cares of the family have thickened about them. To a large extent we are born into habits, as we are born into homes. And when the habit of the home has scarcely the shadow of a religious tendency you need hardly wonder if the children

and young people in it maintain the succession. It is not that these homes are hostile to the Churches, or are infidel to Christian teaching; they simply know nothing about Churches or their teaching, and have not the remotest interest in it. Some of these children have received a certain amount of religious instruction in the Sunday school; and a much larger proportion of them have made some acquaintance with it in our public elementary schools. But the drawback is, that in so many cases they receive just enough to weary them and not to excite curiosity and create interest. And when we consider how long a time it takes to get a new thought or idea into the heads of any considerable body of people with good average intelligence, we need not wonder that lads, who now are their own masters almost before they are in their teens, should readily forget what they never knew. We need not marvel if they grow up in practical heathenism amid a so-called Christian civilization. I once overheard a conversation among a group of lads, ranging from eleven to fourteen years of age. One of this

group, a sharp-looking lad, was relating to the others, with every indication of ridicule and disbelief, the story of our Lord's miracle with the loaves and the fishes. The recital of this story was received with shouts of derisive laughter, mingled with exclamations of "Get away ; no one would believe that !" Yet these lads must have read or heard the story a score of times, if not in the Sunday, still as a Bible lesson in the day school. But they certainly simulated ignorance well, if its significance had penetrated the skin of either memory or interest, until it was held up for their amusement by a smart companion. The ignorance and indifference of the masses about religion have gone past the parents and laid hold of the children. They inherit, as it were, this indifference, and it is confirmed by example through their earlier and most susceptible years, until, in the case of thousands of lads in this city, by the time they are fairly well in their teens, they are almost as impervious to religious teaching and influence as the dead.

A second reason for this indifference of the masses about the Churches and public worship



is that so many of them have all but lost their soul. I do not use this phrase in its theological signification. I mean that they have lost their soul as people sometimes lose one of the senses, like sight or hearing. This loss is not peculiar to the masses. I can well recall an article I read years ago from the pen of the late Mr. James Payn on the weariness of modern life. It was not a metaphysical question, he said, that educated people were discussing and losing their spirits about. They did not ask, "Is life worth living?" but, "Do I wish to be out of it?"

This writer did not hesitate to affirm with an apparent seriousness that no small number of people refrained from making an end of themselves, not because they feared death, but because their families would lose their insurance money. He ridiculed the idea of a "heaven of glory, and action, and sublime joy." The very thought of a soul that cannot die and be done with it all was to multitudes the burden of a great horror.

This view of life was described at the time as

a return to the pagan condition, in which "death is not feared, and spiritual terror is unfelt." And if this were true of what was called society twenty years ago, it is said to be more true to-day. I am in no position to pronounce an opinion. If indeed this weariness were confined to the leisured classes alone, either then or now—to those who exist but to reap where they have not sown, and gather where they have not strawed—I should not unduly lament.

But the very serious consideration which the Churches, as trustees of the moral and religious life of the nation, have now to confront is the undeniable fact that the same [spirit of weariness with the present and hopelessness about the future has taken <sup>fast</sup> hold of the masses] as probably never before in the history of Christian effort.

With the younger democracy the animal life is not extinguished, but at present it would seem that all power of high action and thought is. It is when we come to the older men and women, who have had fewer chances and whose place is fixed, that the weariness of their lives

impresses one as so sad and empty of outlook. For the younger men, who might do so much to lift themselves and raise their order and will not, our feelings are divided between indignation and contempt. We say that they must reap as they sow. If they care only to fit themselves to be beasts of burden they can hardly wonder if they are ridden accordingly. But, I repeat, when we come to those whose advantages are behind them, who have yet to match their limited and precarious capital of strength and years against the modern industrial system, then it must be hard for God to pity the man who does not pity them. No one who has not been in it can realize how some kinds of manual labour tend to take the character out of a man by using up the body and dispensing with any mind he may happen to have as a constituent that does not count. The man who quarries the marble block from its bed is a "common labourer," an incident in the cost of removing it from one place to another. It is the man who transforms the marble into a Galatea who sits in king's houses. We talk

about the dignity of labour, but it is hard for a man to respect himself who is forced to do what no one else will do ~~who~~ if by gift or accident he can escape it. I have seen men become almost as much a part of the machine on which they worked as the mechanism of which it was made. Just as one of the greatest problems of a nation is how to play wisely, so is it one of the most important influences on a man's character that the work by which he earns his bread shall provide him with the elements of self-respect. 57

There are few things that carry a man more surely and rapidly into mental and moral indifference than the feeling that he is the slave of toil that is brainless and distasteful.

Nor is this all. With the vast mass of unskilled labour are its kindred and almost inevitable disadvantages. As the man is generally ill paid who is engaged in it, so generally is he badly housed. Think how the people are crowded, even wedged together, in our large cities and towns, with sometimes less pretence to decency or humanity than we herd

cattle ; with less regard for space than is given to the stacking of cloth.

There is not a heart which can feel, that would not be torn and crushed could we know how many men and women there are in Glasgow to-night who have settled it, that things can never be worse for them in any conceivable world than they are in this. They no more fear death than they fear sleep ; they have no more thought or concern about a life beyond the grave than they have about last year's weather. Heaven and hell, sin and salvation, and the realities these words represent, express less to them than the sounds that convey an oath. (The great conceptions, and as we think more than conceptions, of the Fatherhood of God, the redemption of the race through Jesus Christ, the power of the new life of faith on the Son of God, are meaningless formulæ to untold men and women fighting the battle from which there is no discharge but death ; the grim struggle for sheer existence, with the chances at every turn of sickness, accident, and no work. These people are not infidel, as I have said, to

the ~~august~~ <sup>high</sup> and transcendent truths of religion. The pathos of it all is that they are past infidelity, they simply have no soul for them; it has dropped, ~~fallen~~ out. From their weariness and hopelessness has come an utter indifference not only about the Churches, but the very God they are supposed to preach and teach.

Another and a third reason for the indifference of the masses about the Churches and religion is the emptiness of their lives.

This is part of what has been said already, but it has a significance of its own. It is a common remark how soon working men and their wives are old. And there is force in it. Nor is it always the result of the conditions of their lives, in hard toil and unsanitary surroundings.

It is to some extent the action of the mind, or rather the want of mind, on the bodily frame. Nothing stays time in its influence on looks so effectually as a genuine interest in something worth doing. When the man in the middle classes has parted with his "romances," as they are cynically described; when the first fires of

human passions have slowed down, and the ties of early friendships have relaxed, he has still much left. There are the resources of education, the craving for some form of recognition or fame, and the pursuit of wealth. The last is the premier incentive. With most men, it alone stays when all else is gone. But take a case, type of many, from the working classes. By the time a youth has reached the age at which the law regards him as a man, he has often as much wage as he ever expects to earn.

He gets married far too young, and, as I have seen it frequently enough, by the time he is thirty or thirty-five in the count of years he is fifty or fifty-five in the toil and turmoil of life.

Almost all living interest in himself or in his outlook for the future has thinned out like wasting magic. When he should be at his best and most strenuous years, it is common enough for him to have reached the anti-climax of a dull existence, when, to use his own words, he is indifferent as to "which end goes first."

There is a great vacuum in his life which has

to be filled more or less somehow. It is the emptiness which is indeed full, first with temptation, and then too often of Satan. When a man has no resources of a nature to hearten and keep him on his better side ; when he has made a stranger of his soul ; when the last person he cares to be alone with is himself—we need not be surprised to see him turn to drink, to gambling, or to sins of the flesh for a momentary respite from the intolerable emptiness and poverty of his existence. "I bet," said a working man to me in Reading, "not for the sake of winning only, although I like to win ; but the fact that a horse-race or any other event is on the way, and I have a shilling or two on it, occupies my thoughts, and makes the hell of monotonous work a bit more bearable."

He told the secret, if secret it be, of some of the most clamant vices of the people. It is the emptiness of their lives. It is their bottomless pit ; and out of it proceeds all manner of evil things, and indifference to religion is one of them.



It may be thought that I have taken a dark view of the subject in hand. You say you know working men who are God-fearing men, men who get as much satisfaction out of their life as the best men do in any other class. So do I, and reckon many of them among my most honoured friends. But they are the remnant, and it is not increasing. For one man with God and hope in his heart, there are fifty who have neither.

I say it advisedly, the condition of the masses, as concerning religion, is a serious reflection upon the Churches. I do not go back upon my main contention for a moment. The people have the solution of the social problem in their own hands; and Churches can neither force their moral decisions, nor do for them what they refuse to do for themselves. But the Churches might have a clearer conscience over this matter than they ought to have at the present time. To say, "Our doors are open; the people can enter if they will," is not to answer the penetrating question of their Lord: "What do ye more than others?"

## CHANGE OF METHODS

“Diversities of operations, but . . . the same God.”

—1 *Corinthians* xii. 6

V

CHANGE OF METHODS

PROBABLY the Roman Catholic Church, of all the Churches, has come into closest touch with the lives and conditions of her poor. But it is no want of charity to say that her instincts and aspirations are ecclesiastical. She all but deliberately permits character to degenerate into superstition, and lays a foundation that cannot, and is not intended to, sustain the weight of freedom, self-government, and a strenuous civilization. Her devotees among the masses of any city or town of Britain are the sorrow of social reformers and the despair of municipal bodies. Rome gets close to her people, to the lowest of them, but she rarely lifts them to the higher reaches of character.

The Established Church in England also has

a ready access to the people through her parochial system. And of that Church, as a Church, I say no ungenerous word. She is doing in many ways a much needed and noble work. "I never think," says one whose testimony is worth quoting, "of the devoted men who, ill paid and overworked, labour night and day among the lapsed masses of our large populations without mingled envy and admiration." But her influence is seriously neutralized by a sacramentarianism that forces her into the limits of a narrow sectarianism ; and again by the exigencies of her relation to the State. The best of her sons work hard to overtake in some measure the effects of causes at which they dare not strike. For her to fight the drink traffic as it will have to be fought would go far to destroy her as an Establishment, and it would go further to make her as a Christian Church.

The Church of Scotland has been faithful to her communion table as distinguished from an altar. She does not claim to be a mysterious entity alone entrusted with the divine gifts

necessary to human salvation. She can live and let live, and for her works' sake she deserves well of Scotland. Through her representative sons she has often said a wise and courageous word for labour, not as opposed to capital, but as having equal rights with capital to a just increment of time and toil.

For my part, I would unchurch no man who is sincere in the sense that his efforts to serve others are honest and self-denying. God has a marvellous way, as it has been well said, of turning into one account the varying efforts of men who strangely enough dream that they are rivals and even foes. "Every expenditure of a fine life lifts the race a little nearer the Fountain of all life, and a good heart cannot exhale its purity in vain."

It is, however, with the Evangelical Free Churches I am concerned at present, and I think we have some advantages in our attack on the problem under discussion. No matter how far we fall short of our ideal, the essential polity of our Churches is democratic. We ought to be open to no charge of priestcraft on

the one hand, nor to the reproach of State favouritism on the other. We make character, again, the test of an inward change. We utterly refuse to separate between morals and religion; and distrust all piety which would hold itself superior to the stern control of conscience. While again, as the greater which includes the less, amid all our weaknesses, we believe and teach that the new life, which works out in love to a divine Person, is the mainspring of religious motive; that by it do we attain to purity of religious sentiment and strength of religious practice.

And in many ways our Churches were never better equipped than they are to-day for effective warfare upon worldliness and indifference about religion. There has been no time when more earnest, devout and cultured men were to be found in the ministry and service of our Churches. How is it, then, that Churches that can command money, sympathy, and workers for almost any object are yet so impotent in the presence of any one of some half-dozen evils that are throttling the life out of the

nation? The real answer to this question is in the fact that so many of our Churches are notoriously living on the wrong side of their power; the answer on its human side is to a large extent in our isolation.

Speaking on what I have called the human side, I am persuaded that the first condition of finding the day of our power as Free Churches is to get rid of our miserable denominational jealousies and divisions, and close our ranks. It is usually said that these different denominations are like different regiments in an army, each sustaining a distinct and special part as contributing to one aim and result. This, perhaps, is as it should be, but is it as it is? The safest refuge for a fallacy is its sufficient repetition. The truth is, that the denominations are more like religious combines, and measure their success by the means they acquire, by absorbing, or outstripping, their competitors. We are mostly playing for our own hand. We live, in the sense of aggression, upon our own vitals. The prosperity of one Church only too often means the adversity of others. We fail



to get at outside resources, and every year the scramble among ourselves becomes more naked and less ashamed. We do not hold our Church life as a debt due to the world for which Christ died. We do not stand together as a corporate spiritual body pledged to reach, through a great catholicity of means, the same supreme end. The results are obvious and manifold ; and one of them is telling grievously upon the ministry.

It is perhaps not too much to say that there are hundreds of men in the ministry of our Free Churches who are well-nigh crushed by this isolation, against which they are powerless to contend. They feel that they are part of a system which means every man for himself, and the fates deal with the hindmost. "They can turn to the God they preach to others," it may be said. So they can: so could Jesus have done when in His heart-break He looked upon the sleeping disciples and said, "Could ye not watch with Me one hour?" The world against which we have to contend has perhaps never been so organized and compact together as it is to-day. Never could it make it so costly for

its Nonconformists. Money, fashion, pleasure, and selfishness have arrived, as it were, at a touch of omnipotence. It is all very well to say that one with God is a majority. That is the doctrine for heroes, and only a few of us are cast in the heroic mould. Our Lord knew this when He sent out the "other seventy also, two and two, before His face." It is strange, and yet not strange, how ineffective some men are when alone, and how transformed with power they become when reinforced by even another.

If, then, there were about us a large and rushing movement toward God—the pressure of multitudes, the fervour of a crowd, the contagion of numbers; if there stood about us a fair brotherhood of the Churches bound to this high chivalry, warring for the right—then there is nothing we might not hope to achieve.

I have long ceased to look for any union to be found only in opinion; I expect no consolidation of the Church of Christ based upon what is called "intellectual agreement."

The union which has in it any promise of unity must be found in the heart, in the highest

thought and the deepest emotion ; it must be translated in the spirit of that supreme declaration to all time, "One is your Master, even Christ ; and all ye are brethren."

And once found there, we shall also find amid the greatest diversity of conception and expression, brotherhood, mutual sympathy and inspiration, strong and effective co-operation.

It is vain to expect that we shall ever compel the world to come out of itself into the kingdom of our Lord while the Churches, which claim to be the Body of His soul, are standing at the three angles of the triangle, far as possible apart. To talk as though this internecine war, which is exhausting our energies, is inevitable, is virtually to surrender our chance against the indifference and practical godlessness of our day. If the various Churches cannot bear their distinctive testimony, and yet keep their hands upon the shaft of the same plough, then it means that organized Christianity, as represented through us, is a failure.

Until our Churches close their ranks, and get

the control of their forces, that they may be set to the definite end we profess to have before us, it is useless to discuss changes that will have to be made before the end can be accomplished. No one quite sees how it is to be brought about, but most people who think seriously about these things are agreed that a radical change is needed in the Ministry of our Churches. The times have changed, and long pastorates are increasingly difficult to sustain with freshness and acceptance. There are a few exceptionally gifted men who may do it ; but they, too often, are monopolized by the strong Churches they build up. I am inclined to think that, if instead of one, some three or four great cities had been privileged to have the massive and profoundly spiritual ministry of Dr. Dale, the gain to the religious life of the nation would have been enhanced. And if in these days the highly endowed men be scarcely saved, where shall the average order appear? It is no secret that there are hundreds of ministers who are as weary of their charges as it is to be feared their charges are weary of

them. And where things have not reached this pass, there may be an unexpressed feeling on the part of people and minister alike that he has reached the extent of his influence and usefulness. This restlessness is more evident in our working-class congregations than in the middle-class Churches.

The latter can generally retain the man they wish to keep ; the former have often to bear when they would gladly change. The monotony of their daily lives reacts in a craving for change of voice, man, and manner of putting things. In its power to meet this craving you have much of the secret of the success of Methodism. Had Wesley not provided for the resources of his preachers, and the nature of their hearers, in his itinerant system, it may be questioned whether the new movement would have survived his death. It may be urged that a minister's character should tell for much, even where his gifts are very moderate. So it does, undoubtedly, in more circumscribed spheres of work ; but in our large centres of population, where the minister must challenge men with

both gifts and character, the latter, on its merits, has not the same chance. We live in many ways quickly to-day. We often cram as much excitement into a week as our fathers got out of a year. And while we need not yield to the arbitrary side of this craving for change, we must not ignore the inevitable in it.

Our ministers must somehow find the liberation which will give them the true enfranchisement of their native strength and capacity. We must reconsider our relation to the pulpit. Preaching has become the slavery of the average ministry, and one serious weakness of our Churches. We have far too much preaching for the sake of preaching. Had we but half of what we have, and that half what it should be, the pulpit would become the most powerful throne in Christendom. The Church in the past has been made by her preaching, and not less, but more, will she have to depend upon it for her future. It is in this fact that you find the seriousness of an ineffective pulpit.

At present it may be doubted whether any institution in society has a more equivocal place

than our average preaching. Just as proverbs are the colporteurs of philosophy, so are jokes and gibes a reflection of the common sentiment of a given time. And almost any stupid joke in the mouth of any wooden person is safe, if perpetrated at the expense of a sermon. But even good and sensible people, who esteem very highly the place and uses of the sermon in public worship, have serious misgivings about the present use of a great opportunity. Could we get at the cost and number of the sermons preached in Glasgow in one year, and confront with its results, that cost of time, toil, and wear and tear of body and mind, few of us could restrain the feeling, "Why this waste?" I know that we cannot get at these results by any process of cold calculation. There are phenomena we cannot print on a balance sheet or show on a schedule. There are birthplaces even yet in what often passes for commonplace preaching, of worthier impulse, nobler aspiration, wider charity, and ardent longing for a higher life.

But when all is said on this side, our own

instinct tells us that there is a leakage in this institution, which runs out in great waste. It is not everywhere that grace can compensate for what nature has denied. Art can do much for a man, grace can do more, but neither can work on what is not there. Multitudes of good and effective men in their own directions are forced week by week into pulpits to attempt to do what is obviously beyond their powers. The cry to the Churches is, "Unloose them, and let them go" to the work for which they are fitted, and in which they can do good.

It comes to this : we should have an order of preachers ; men who are born, and not made. We should have men whose very being seems to breathe out the old passionate cry, " Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel." We need preachers whose personality compels men, and whose endowments by nature and gifts of grace cast over their hearers the spell and authority of a mighty message. It is a grave mistake to hastily conclude that the masses of the people do not know how to value good preaching. They may not see what an educated man sees



in the academic accessories of a sermon, but they are quick to seize upon its intrinsic excellencies, and eager to profit from its genuine worth. I have seen an audience of working men follow with rapt attention, and very evident signs of intelligent impression, one of the polished and masterly addresses by Dr. Fairbairn. They are not the thoughtful working men who are attracted by a cheap and vulgar sensationalism in the pulpit.

The people who support this business are of the type that would bring religion down to jugglers and table turning, and are ready to welcome any variation in a malaise of purposeless existence.

Really interesting, practical, and able preaching was never more valued, where it is valued, than it is to-day. The difference between now and what some people regard as its palmiest days is in the circumstance, that influences at work in society have taught the people to discriminate better between what is worth hearing and what is not. They no longer make a fetish of the pulpit, but they prize it none the less

where it is a pulpit. If we had but a score of such pulpits in Glasgow, and the rest were closed down upon preaching which is only to order, this great power, which is really the principal medium of moral and spiritual inspiration, would heighten in character, gather in premium, and take its regal place as a regenerative force in society.

If we had an order of preachers responsible for this work in the Churches, it would set a large and much needed body of men free to exercise their special gifts in other fields of service. The tendency of the age is towards specialization, and the increase of knowledge will confirm it. Men who are effective, know things ; it is not enough to know something about them. It is now in the ministry, as in every responsible sphere of life, the man who knows everything is held to know nothing. A man may not be a preacher but he may be a pastor, teacher, or organizer. But he cannot be a preacher and something else at the same time.

He who is to influence men in our day by his preaching must sacrifice himself entirely to his

calling; and he who is not a preacher by nature has often to use up time and strength over a preparation which yields no adequate return.

Preaching, however good, is, after all, but a part of the work of the Churches, and a part is not the whole. Until we take steps to meet our crying need we may almost abandon our attempts to evangelize the masses of the people. We must at all hazards come into close and intelligent contact with their lives and homes, or anything else we may attempt will be in vain. I say intelligent contact, because a mere professional knowledge here is more dangerous than no knowledge at all. Untold harm is done by well meaning people who enter these homes with certain ideas of what ought to be, rather than with tact and a sympathetic readiness to make the best of things as they find them.

There is as great a distance between the sober, self-respecting and skilled artizan, and the drunken unskilled labourer, as there is between the skilled artizan and the most finished product of the upper classes. There

is as much difference, or variation, in the pathology of poverty as there is in the pathology of a soul. And the man who does not know by instinct how to handle each case as it presents itself, should never by any chance be entrusted with this work. But if he does know, let the Church seize him, and use him, for he is a pearl of great price. Our Missionary Boards now, in most instances, insist upon the men they send into the foreign field having some acquaintance with the elements of medicine and surgery. And a young man who comes from a middle-class home, unless he is clearly marked out for other directions, should have, as part of his training for the ministry, twelve months at least in some shipyard, or iron-works, or factory. He would thus get first hand at the strength and weakness, the best and the worst of these men. He would learn to understand their prejudices, and the limitations that arise out of defects of education and the influences of surroundings. He would get at their point of view by knowing how to put himself in their place ; and until a man can get the

inwardness of their lives and thoughts he can neither rebuke with effect, nor pity with judgment. This is something which must be gained by experience. It cannot come through books, lectures, or theories; and until the Churches acquire it, we shall fail to lay hold of the people who must be reached as the first big hostage to a renewed world. Our Churches as yet but faintly realize how this phase of the ministry would be valued by the people. There is a common impression that on the side of the working classes there is little love lost for the minister. That is so when the minister is the grave of the man. But where they find minister and man his presence is received with an appreciation which is pathetic in its significance. These people have a sure instinct for the real and unselfish in a minister. At the heart of them they respect his calling; and apart from the moral end he has in view, he is welcomed as a nexus between them and a life from which they are gradually getting farther apart.

I value with any man the work that is done by our city missionaries, and the men whom we

place at our mission stations. Most of these men work hard and conscientiously, and some of them with conspicuous success. But those who have a fairly large acquaintance with the operations of these mission centres know how commonly they are handicapped by deficiencies of training, want of imagination, and limitations of resource. We must have our best men for this most difficult task that faces the Churches. We must have men who, by selection, adaptation, and training, can go in and out among the people with the refining influence of culture, the authority of character, and the winning yet compelling force of a Christlike sympathy. It is a sphere of labour which will demand the best there is in the best men; and no man should be in it who has not a great missionary heart, a keen mother-wit, and a mighty hold upon God. Once get the Churches in earnest to reach the people, and the men can be found; and, when they are found, set them free from every other duty; back them up with the prayers, the fervour, and the material resources at our command.

Then there is the teaching function of the Churches. This, without question, requires an order of men specially fitted for it.

Why should not a proportion of our Churches be used week by week for the study of the Bible, under the guidance of men who are specialists in the great Book? One of the first things we have to do is to rescue the Bible in the minds of the people from the perilous position in which modern criticism has placed it.

Those who have come into contact with the thinking and commerce of opinion among the working men are often surprised to find how quickly the speculations of the study become the possession of the crowd. While the student is balancing his evidence for, or against, a given position, occasionally indulging an opinion in one direction, or an impression in another, the newspaper and review are quick to seize these feelers and write them up as accepted truths. Most working men read newspapers, some of them look into reviews, and they know more about these controversies than we imagine.

And many of them are sorely perplexed and

troubled ; for underneath much apparent indifference, there is a sincere reverence for the old Book. It is bound up with the sacred associations of father and mother, of funeral and marriage ; and with the deep places of life.

And we must have men who can give the Bible back to the people ; men who can tell them what it is, how to use it, and for what purpose. We must have teachers who can correct men's perversities with regard to the Book on the one hand, and restrain a reckless criticism on the other ; teachers who can also exhibit the caution which is needed in taking the Bible out of the sphere of emotion, and transferring it to the realm of ideas. We must have men who can give the people intellectual confidence and heart-rest in the Bible as a divinely appointed Scripture for the human race.

There is also the sphere of organization, and it is in the first rank of importance. We commonly hear it said of a minister that " he is no preacher but he is a splendid organizer." And God forbid that this should be said with an



accent of depreciation. There are hundreds of sermons preached week by week which, to all human appearance, accomplish little or nothing, from the circumstance that we have no means to give them effect and direction. It is a dangerous thing to excite even noble emotions without giving them the opportunity to commute themselves in some form of action. Had we an order of preachers—men gifted and full of a living faith in the living Christ, who, after an inspired effort, could hand over the people, aroused and eager, to men who could show them how to turn feeling into deeds, thought into things, then “Christian work” would cease to be a phrase and become a mighty reality. We ought to have a proportion of our Churches set apart Sunday by Sunday in which, amid the associations of God’s House and in the atmosphere of prayer, Christian workers might confer with each other about the needs of a given district, or some phase of the great campaign, under the guidance of men who can use fervour and direct purpose into the channel, indicated by the deep word, “Everything shall

live whither the river cometh." It is when men are hard at work to translate some holy enthusiasm that, almost without knowing it, they resolve themselves into the only concordat which can depress our differences and exalt our agreements : " Difference of operations, but the same Spirit."



## AN OBJECT LESSON

“Compel them to come in, that My house may be full.”  
—*St. Luke* xiv. 23

## VI

### AN OBJECT LESSON

**B**UT do the Churches want them to come in? Are the Churches determined to reach the great outside masses? This is more important than how to reach them. Let there be no mistake about the will, and a way can be found. Is there the will? Such a question may sound like a reflection on the Churches. It is too late to discuss that; the reflection is in its force.

To expect the Churches to surrender their denominationalism, the human mind being what it is; to expect the ministry to revolutionize itself into orders of men, as roughly indicated in a former address, is like trying to build upon the baseless fabric of a dream, so we are told. And there might be reason in it if the forces of action and reaction in the world

consulted the convenience of the Churches. It is the last thing they do. The Churches may become respectable entities, vested interests as sordid as a syndicate, but God never leaves Himself without witnesses. The trend of things points to a struggle that is about to tell. It is to be not so much between the outside world and the Church, as between the world within the Church and the Church which is not of the world. The ancient word, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate," is being heard as a cry to the Churches of the living Christ to define clearly their relation to a huge institution called the Church which is yet saturated with the death-dews of the world. A great novelist, speaking of the dual forces of good and evil at work within us, makes one of his creations say that, it is the "curse of mankind that these incongruous faggots should be thus bound together; that in the agonized womb of consciousness these polar twins should be continually struggling."

Something like this, if not a curse, is yet a great weakness of the Churches, and it is be-

ing felt with searching force. It is apt to be with Churches as it is with human lives.<sup>1</sup> We go through spaces at times of easy commonplace existence with nothing great or grand before us, and then, as it has often been remarked, there is nothing great or grand about us. But suddenly we are obliged to confront some great change, or some trouble falls upon us, and our good time, in the old sense, is over. And although we feel very sore about it at the time, if we are worth world-room we know afterwards that the experience was needed to reveal to us our real power and get from us our best.

So Churches easily fall asleep and readily take advantage of any opportunity to be at ease in Zion, but in the measure of their possibilities do they get a rude awakening. Processes may seem long, but results often occur with startling rapidity. The Churches have long been uneasy about some of the symptoms in society, but these last dozen years have developed troubles the nature and extent of

<sup>1</sup> Robert Collyer.



which nothing short of pessimism could have suspected. Does not the apathy of the Churches become intolerable? do not their differences appear contemptible in face of the materialism, the cynical morality, and undisguised paganism of these latter days?

The Churches have the question on their hands as never before, whether denominational differences and conservatism in methods of operation, are to be more sacred to them than the great end they profess to have before them. It is not enough to say that the reactionary forces at work in our modern world are a recrudescence of troubles always to be found beneath the surface of society.

A man needs to see much, if he need to see more than he may see with tolerably open eyes, to convince him that the Churches have come to a death-grip with powers which they must either overcome or be overcome by them. Drink, and lust, and greed, and indulgence no longer say, "By your leave"; they have ceased to be apologetic; that caution has been transferred to the Christians. I do not look for

much change as affecting ministers who have reached, or passed, a certain age and set in the work. It might be unjust to expect it, and cruel to attempt to enforce it. Ministers have possibly the same rights to recognition of vested interests with the publicans. But we might make a start in the direction of our young men who are preparing for the work or just entering upon it.

If we agree that, numerically at least, the democracy are not so much a class as a nation ; if we further agree that a necessary, if not a first, condition of getting a saved nation is to get a saved democracy, then we must be prepared to employ means to accomplish our object, however they may fit or not fit in with the old order of things. Life is more than ideas or traditional usages ; and given the honesty of both, the end is more important than the means used to reach it. Nothing can be done with the masses from what we understand as the religious standpoint while they regard the ministry, as many do at present, with suspicion, distrust and not unfrequently with very pro-

nounced hostility. At all cost, and at any expense of methods, we must correct and remove the impression that our thoughts concerning them, and our desires for them, go no deeper down than professional interest. We are now regarded as a class apart ; as a body of men who, by education and social sympathies, are strictly away from the workers. We have to beget in them a confidence which, when it is justified in their experience, readily passes into trust.

There is a common impression that the working classes are fickle and unreliable, always ready to turn upon their friends for whims and prejudices that argue not only chronic ingratitude, but stupidity. Such a temper is not confined to any single class. It is readily found where there is far less justification for it. If we allow for the almost entire lack of training of the faculties necessary to a large and sane judgment, amid a multiplicity of conflicting interests, the working-class human nature will compare with human nature all round. The main difference is in the suggestion we get

in a well known aphorism that "vice loses half of its objection when stripped of its grossness." A silly prejudice, or the expression of a foolish opinion, may sound tolerable over a glass of wine in a well furnished room, but it loses in accessories when emphasized with a rough oath in a pot-house over a mug of beer. My experience convinces me that no class of people respond more readily than do the workers, to what gains upon them as disinterested and transparent efforts to do them good. Nothing can win, and nothing can hold them short of a great self-sacrifice on our part. There is a dainty, modish variety of an imitation article with which not a few people in our Churches amuse themselves, and it hardens the people against those who are sincere and earnest in this work.

But let the people realize that we are prepared for self-sacrifice, and from no other motive than their highest interests, and none are more surely won and securely held. Let it be seen that for love of God we carry for them the print of the nails, and bear in our body the marks of

the Lord Jesus, and we have found moral solidity for the only fulcrum that can lift the great under-masses.

Nearly twenty years ago, when I began my ministry in Leeds, there was in that city what is known as a "mid-town" Church, or, as we should say in Glasgow, a "city" Church.

It had once been a strong cause and the mother of Churches, but when I first knew the place it was rapidly sinking into a great deserted building in the very heart of a dense working-class population. For some years after this things went from bad to worse, until a committee appointed to report upon the prospects of the mid-town Churches in Leeds reported upon the one I am speaking of to the effect "that it had been left high and dry by the receding population"—meaning the population out of which Congregationalism is supposed to gather its constituency—"and advised that it should be sold . . . and its proceeds be applied to work in Hunslet or Roundhay," the latter of these suggested localities being a growing suburb of the city. About the time this docu-

ment of despair was under consideration two young men—alumni of my own college—had finished their course and were seeking a settlement.<sup>1</sup> They intimated to the <sup>2</sup> Principal their wish to work together as colleagues in some sphere the nature of which they specified. He recommended them to the notice of what was left of this “mid-town” Church in Leeds. A call was given, and eventually the two young men began their work amid conditions which, actually and prospectively, were about as forlorn as the sharpest fate could have well provided for them. They pledged themselves, I believe, with each other not to marry within a given time, and to be content with what salary the place could raise, granted it amounted to food and lodging. Quietly, and without ostentation, they entered upon their labour, ready to do anything there was to be done to make it a success, from preaching a sermon to repairing a gas-pipe. And what has come out of it? After ten years, by the blessing of God, and their own patient,

<sup>1</sup> Revs. Bertram Smith and Francis Wrigley, B.A.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. Dr. Falding—*clarum et venerabile nomen*.

faithful and strenuous toil, they have transformed a great empty building, and an infinitesimal Church, into a wondrous centre of social uplifting, moral influence, and spiritual power.

The morning congregation is good. In the afternoon they have a large meeting of men, while at evening service they are crowded with men and women drawn from these working-class surroundings. They have raised large sums of money for special objects, and the general upkeep of the work has been generously sustained.

"Not the least striking thing about this work," says one who knows it well, "is the love which *men* have for these two pastors. The congregations have invariably a good proportion of men, and," remarks this same authority, in words which get their force from their studied exaggeration, "many of these men would willingly give up their lives for the two brethren who have led them into a new world."

Nor must it be thought that these brethren were only "cut out" for this kind of work. They had gifts and attainments which would have enabled them on leaving college to com-

pete, for that is what it amounts to, for the most desirable settlements that were going. Nor are they duplicates of each other, but opposites in almost everything save their devotion to one another, and the commission they have received of the Lord Jesus.

Why cannot such men be multiplied? Why cannot such work, in its nature and results, be repeated amid any considerable population of our land? It is where the struggle is hardest, and the demands most searching that we need the pick of our young men. We need them in the rose-bloom of their years, and at the flow-tide of their enthusiasm. We need them before they have caught the infection of a commonplace belief in God, and have become poisoned with its respectability, and selfishness. The conventional ambition which seems to possess the average aspirant to the ministry, to put through the regulation training, secure a snug church, and settle down to married life, may have its uses, but it has none in that arena where God and the world need men. He who gives his first hostages on the threshold of the ministry



to these directions, offers them to conditions which are almost sure to be too much for him.

He who is furnishing a nursery with the means needed for furnishing a library, and the time required to better furnish his head, may with almost certainty be written out of our hopes, as a pioneer and path-finder in the new world. The Roman Catholic idea of marrying a man to the Church has something to be said for it. While I do not believe for a moment in the enforced and life-celibacy of the clergy, I do believe that a young minister should wait, as many other people have to do, until he has given some account of himself before entering upon this searching responsibility. One very serious break in the effectiveness of the modern ministry is in the fact that so many of us dare not speak boldly as we ought to speak on some of the most pressing questions of the day, because we have placed ourselves in positions that cannot afford a too sensitive conscience or risk a too outspoken message. Some at any rate of the years of a young man's first love for his work should be given to places that

involve risks, and risks he dare accept. To get his moral leverage he must be free to utter himself, to defy the conspiracy of discretion, the selfishness of silence, which binds the average ministry like cause and effect. The fact, the phenomenon we may call it, that these two young men, well educated, and, from a worldly point of view, eligible for much better chances, had come to attack a lost cause, a forsaken centre of religious effort, and with no other motive but that of trying to do good, laid hold upon the imagination of these artizans of Leeds. It became the talk in their workshops, and the wonder of their homes. To the sceptical question, "Can anything unselfish come out of the parson Nazareth?" there was the modest but audacious challenge, "Come and see." Here at last was a bit of the fibre of the cross in men who could say, "We seek not yours, but you." And after ten years this is the testimony of a close observer of their work: "Many of these working men would willingly give up their lives for the brethren who have led them into the new

world." It is the old truth, "Nothing but sacrifice on the part of those who are really making sacrifice can compel men to higher things. No man is infidel to a great unselfish love, and there are few who cannot be brought into its gracious captivity.

Our best men, and in their best years, must be committed to this divine compulsion of the great masses; for it will strain the largest resources of knowledge, wisdom, and piety.

The Churches are now face to face with a truth from which they can turn away only at the peril of their existence. If the gospel we have to preach is the power of God unto salvation, that salvation must have in it some true principle of correspondence between the divine affinities and the secular surroundings of the soul.

It is the immediate task of the Churches to lay hold of the principle and give it adequate incarnation. What we talk about as a heavenly future, and what we know as many an earthly present, must cease to be in such hopeless confusion. "Shall the disciple of Christ," asks one,

"be unable to read his history, and know nothing of his place in the providence of the world, midway between the line of the prophets and the fellowship of the saints?" Our Lord taught us to pray, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven," and it is in this direction that the spirituality of the Christian faith must prove its power. In working itself out, it must "descend from its height and flow into the very limits of the lower life."

<sup>1</sup> And the Churches must set in motion whatever organizations they find needful for this end. As it has been often urged, they must invoke the riches of nature, the glory of art; they must seek to investigate the forces of society, and direct the aspirations of reform. Our most promising young men in the Churches must be encouraged and helped to win a seat on the Town Council as an integral part of the higher service. A place on any public body, or position, which enables a man to heighten the standard of public life, must be recognized Christian work equally with any sphere directly

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Estlin Carpenter.

within the Church ; as much a discipline in holiness, as the seasons when he seeks his audience with God hindered by no world between. This service must be undertaken not for self-aims and personal ambition ; not for the sake of position as position ; still less for the sake of profit or gain ; nor even for the aesthetic pleasure of widening knowledge, or the opportunity of growing influence. Done from these motives only, how shall a man answer the searching question of his Lord, "What do ye more than others?"

There should be, especially in our mid-town Churches, classes or societies, or whatever term may be used to describe them, for the systematic study of national, social, and economic questions, and the sharpening of opinions about these questions by discussion. And this, again, ought to be regarded, equally with the service of praise and preaching, as means in the uplifting of men and to the glory of God. It should be the aim of these agencies, conceived in prayer and hallowed by their motive, to fit the workers to become centres of light and leading in their

various places of industry. There are situations in which one man is a multitude. I have seen and realized the power and influence of one sensible, intelligent, and God-fearing man over his fellow-workmen. The Churches have no more valuable asset in their attempts to reach the people than the character and example of such a man in his daily surroundings. It is usually said that such an environment is next to fatal to Christian character. But surroundings are not environment. A man is his own environment; and he who can show others how to be in a place and not of it, may render them a signal service.

It may be urged that to meddle with such matters would be to engender strifes, and prepare the way for endless division.

This is possible ; but it seems to me that the Churches will be obliged to move in the direction of this risk. They lose much because they are afraid to reap where they have sown. They lack the courage of their convictions. It is no longer worth our while to denounce evils we are not prepared to fight. The Churches cannot

afford to waste more time in tinkering at consequences of causes, instituted by cunning wickedness and cruel greed. They must strike at the causes and strike to kill. And surely a religion which has a cross at its centre, and a crucified Man as its object of worship, can give us leaders who can teach us to strike with justice, precision, and effect.

This is why I plead for strong, courageous men at our great centres of influence and opportunity. Our Churches must seek as for hidden treasure their young sons with marked individuality, and possibilities of passion for God and their fellow-men. These young men must be prayed for, and besieged with influences to bind them to the altar of this great service.

There must be nothing spared in their equipment—nothing that will impair their readiness to come forth strong in heart and brain to handle the most difficult problems of life and thought. These young men can be found, and their advent would mean a reconstruction of the ministry, and with it the power of a new day. There is nothing impossible with God,

which is God-like. Impossibilities can only live in Churches which are existing on the wrong side of Pentecost. We need the audacity of a great faith tempered by wisdom and quickened in love. We need the dynamic—the power of the Spirit—which can bring in through us the grand apocalypse of a new heaven and a new earth.

These young men, I repeat, can be found—brave, strong, gifted fellows, who for love of Christ are ready to attack the huge indifference, and go far to conquer the practical godlessness of the masses of the people.

Earnestness creates earnestness, and if our Churches are living, young men will be born of its spirit ; and where they turn to this ministry with evident calling they must be upheld by the united prayers and enthusiasm of God's people. When the two young men whom I have mentioned entered on this work in Leeds, the handful of people who constituted the Church soon began to scatter. Some had clung to the place for old sake's sake, some from a mere morbid shrinking from change of any kind.



But a revolution had come, and many of the few fled. <sup>1</sup> One man, whom I know well, threw himself, not critically and doubtfully, but warmly and believingly, into the new order of things from its start. He was a deacon of the Church, not rich, but the only well-to-do man left. Although living a considerable distance from the Church, he was always to be found in his place, and at his post, helping these two young pastors with his mature judgment, and heartening them with his encouragement and support. And if men knew what to envy they would not sin in coveting this man's conscience about this work.

How much success may we expect, or, indeed, venture to pray for, while we have the present divisions between the classes, which are largely the creation of the Churches? I am told of a building called a Church, recently opened at the west end of a certain city, in which the prices for pews were made prohibitive against the working classes in its neighbourhood.

The managers of this concern were anxious

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Joseph Watson.

that it should begin with the reputation of being what is called here a "class" Church. In other words, if this is true, they have made it prohibitive against the Carpenter's Son; and it may be that the prohibition will exclude more than they intended. I confess myself unable to understand the interpretation of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man which exhausts itself over an exclusive Church of this order. It may have its economy in the provisions for worship. But I would rather ask, Why should not a strong and representative proportion of our west end families come into the city where they make their money, to worship with those who help to make it? Surely if there is a place on earth where men and women should meet together, divided by no accident of position and worldly fortune, it is the Christian sanctuary.

This mixing together of rich and poor in the worship of the one All-Father, would be a potent solvent of much frozen element in our social life; it would enable the highest order of men to undertake these central positions, and thus make them to the crowds of struggling,

tempted, weary, and all but broken lives none other than the House of God, and the very gate of heaven.

It comes back to the same question : Do the Churches want to reach the masses of the people ? Have they any genuine faith that the great under-crowds can be brought, clothed and in their right mind, under the reign of Him who came to seek and to save the lost ? The vital heresy of our times is not so much the indifference of the people about the Churches, as the indifference of the Churches about the people. If the Churches believed what Jesus lived believing and died believing, they would find the people because they would have found themselves.

THE FIRST THING FIRST

“When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.”

—*St. Luke* xxii. 32

## VII

### THE FIRST THING FIRST

**I**T has been said that had Jesus been born in one of our great modern cities, He would have been less of the preacher and more of the politician, the reformer, the philanthropist. We should have received from Him schemes of social amendment for the beatitudes, protests against wrong for the parables, proposals for charity organizations and better dwellings for the poor in place of the new commandments. The Jesus of to-day, it is said, would aim at equalizing all classes, and commuting wealth of all kinds into one fund for one good. And when some excitable Socialist, impressed by this order of speculation, cries, "Three cheers for Jesus," it is quoted as one more proof that, what working men want is the real Jesus, not doctrines, not theological representations of Him.

Others tell us with equal conviction that if we may judge of what Jesus would do or say, were He back upon the earth, by what He did and said when He was here, we have nothing to warrant us in believing that by word or act would He seek to force on changes for which men are not disciplined and prepared. He would work for the whole through the heart of each ; He would repeat in substance what He said nineteen centuries ago—that it is being, not having, which makes sure.

These latter point to the fact that Jesus knew to the full the bitterness of the struggle for existence ; that He was face to face daily with grinding poverty unrelieved by any of our modern expedients and attempts at amelioration ; that He witnessed arbitrary licence, and brutal caprice in high places of Government, unchecked by an apology for popular control. Yet Jesus gave no leading word about these things on their external side. He placed all His reliance on certain unseen forces, which would do that work in the world when He had finished His own and had passed away.

These, roughly speaking, are the symbols of two methods of conceiving the mission of Christianity in the world ; and while they appear to have little in common they point to the need of a conception and presentation of the Gospel big enough to harmonize these two rival theories of it.<sup>1</sup> It must be the achievement of the twentieth century to secure two things and make them one : “ the personal and religious salvation of the soul from sin ; and the ethical and social salvation of the community from wrong and suffering.” It is said that Dr. R. W. Dale often expressed himself as profoundly disappointed with the ethical results of the Evangelical Revival at the beginning of the last century. And it can hardly be denied that the men who were at the heart of that movement, and many who have been deeply influenced by it, have interpreted the Christian good news too one-sidedly. To them it meant at first, and it has meant since, almost exclusively the “ rescue of the sinner from sin, and the re-adjustment of the sinner’s personal relations towards God as the

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Dykes.



Judge of all." Hence they have proclaimed their message under the figure, as it were, of a lifeboat put out to the sinking ship of humanity, the supreme concern of each man being to get into the boat, however it might fare with the ill-fated vessel. In thought of the awful doom of the sinner, they put their emphasis on the escape from it, and as a consequence other aspects of the Gospel were regarded not only as comparatively unimportant, but as tending to self-righteousness. Their cry, in season and out of season, was, "Get your own soul saved ; let that be your first business, and then you, at any rate, will be on the right side." The insistence was sound, but its spirit has been narrow. Our day is asking for bigger definitions of soul and salvation, and it is finding them. Salvation in the Christian sense means first the new life in man begotten of God. It is the quality unlike anything else in nature. It is, as Henry Drummond used to say, the life which constitutes in man the separate kingdom of Christ, and gives to Christianity its strange, clear mark of divinity. In the working out of that life, salvation implies

the "gradual realization of the ideal state for which man was created ; the highest order and quality of human being. The highest character and blessedness which men individually and collectively are capable of reaching and realizing."

One mistake in popular preaching has been want of distinction between things that differ. Too often have we held up a part of the Christian evangel as though it were the whole. We can make allowance for Majors and Captains of the Salvation Army when they tell people in the same breath, to "get their souls saved ; to get converted, and all will be well with them." But for educated men, who are credited with having some acquaintance with theology, to speak indiscriminately about conversion and salvation, as if they were terms which represent one and the same process, is the cause of much serious confusion. To say that we have only to get people converted and all is right, is to say too little. It would be almost as true to say that a man has only to enter his name on the college books and he

is a scholar. "When thou art converted," said Jesus to Simon Peter, "strengthen thy brethren," and this is what the modern world is asking for, through voices that best interpret its longings. It is the unqualified assertion that conversion is all a man needs to give him every form of self-possession, which so offends many ardent reformers. They see men and women at the base of society—many of whom claim to have been converted to God—living amid far worse outward conditions, than do the animals belonging to another class. Is it very wonderful they should say to these converted people, that, if this is the best their religion can do for them, it says little either for them or for their religion? A religion which is worth world-room should establish some real harmony between the outward life and the inner dignity of men who believe themselves to be sons of God.

It is thus that Christianity which came into the world as the "dayspring from on high, to give light to them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death," is being challenged to fulfil its heaven-born claims. And it can fulfil them

when it is Christianity, and not some partial conception or elementary phase of it. Conversion is not salvation. Conversion is to salvation what the beginning of an undertaking is to the undertaking completed. The man who tells us that a journey is accomplished because it is begun, is hardly more sensible than the would-be reformer who talks as if society could be redeemed by leaving the individual untouched and unchanged.

But the latter fallacy is not so mischievous as the iterated and ill-considered assertion that you have only to get a man converted and his salvation is sure. Take a case out of scores that have come under my own observation. Here is a man who has been converted in the usually accepted sense of the word. He has begun, and, according to his light, is trying to live a life of faith on the Son of God. He slaves hard from morning to night, year in and year out, at some unskilled labour which demands, not head, but sheer physical endurance. He has his wife and children to provide for on a wage barely sufficient to secure the

plainest necessities of existence, with no margin whatever beyond them. His life, indeed, is just a grim struggle on its external side with sordid, and depressing conditions almost from his cradle to his coffin. If salvation means the "realization of the ideal conditions for which we were created," how are we to identify this man's lot with the great enfranchisement? How is he to get the lease of his higher powers while his bodily powers are worn in a struggle that tends to take the very human out of him and replace it by the machine? I do not say it is impossible, for I have seen it done. But it can only be done by men whose lives would put to the blush many of our canonized saints. To watch a man maintain this struggle and come through it an unconquered soul, is to be aware of a "royalty to which the purple robe and acclamation are a vain show."

If we turn to the Bible we have, as it were, little attempt to look at the philosophy of this experience on its economic side.

It is as if the hardships of life experienced by men who are determined to rise above them

were notorious. In some sense the New Testament may be said to give up the question of reasoning on some things; and to say to such men: Bear your troubles bravely, patiently, and God will make it up to you a hundred fold in yourselves and in eternity. Draw your faith as a golden covering over your hardships and disappointments. Trust in God. Rely on His providential care. Believe in His love. Look forward to the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. "For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise."

But there is another side, which is more in the spirit than the letter of Christianity. "Every man," says St. Paul, "shall bear his own burden." There are burdens and sorrows in our human lot which may be eased and comforted; but beyond a point they can neither be carried nor influenced by the tenderest sympathy of others. They are part of that individual responsibility which no man can refuse and live. But St. Paul also says in the same con-

nexion : " Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." This is the collective side of our responsibility all to each and each to all.

A man may be converted, as in the case just mentioned ; he may himself be changed, and yet find himself practically powerless to change his circumstances. His outward lot and his inward hope may be, for anything he can do, in hopeless contradiction. And it is one part of the mission of Christianity in the world to create conditions which exclude this contradiction. For we must not lose sight of the fact that the end of Christ's saving work means more than individual souls, it means more than Churches and societies, it means the kingdom of God on earth.

And this kingdom is no chance multitude of unordered people. It does not teach men the alphabet of salvation and deny them its literature. It overlooks nothing, and it calls nothing common which in any way helps a man to realize the ideal state for which he was created. Its portal, as has been said, is not the grave to

give us entrance to another world.<sup>1</sup> “It is the door of every house, the entrance to every place of business, the gate of every court of public affairs, not one whit less than the inner chambers of conscience and love.” The kingdom of God on earth can never be indifferent whether the laws are just and humanly administered; whether commerce is honest and its increment fairly divided; whether social relations are conducted on natural affinities and helpful friendships, or whether they resolve themselves into caste divisions and selfish expediencies. This kingdom can have in it no unjust privileges, nothing that savours of oppression, nothing that in any way bars equality of opportunity. Its first work must be to liberate the cramped and fettered limbs of men, then to train and animate the energies set free from restraint: “When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.”

And this kingdom is possible; or if it is not, Christianity must end in failure. Ideals are realities. And he who cannot look at this world

<sup>1</sup> Rev. J. Estlin Carpenter.



in the light of what the travail of the Redeemer is yet to make it, must, if he be a good man, carry a heavy burden of doubt and sorrow. We talk about the heresies and unorthodoxies of our day; but one very serious heresy lies not in denial of theoretical explanations about God, and Christ, and Redemption. It is more in the fact that we do not half believe what we profess to believe about our responsibility one to another. If we had faith, and the courage of our faith, conditions and institutions which now defy individual attack could be made to yield to collective assault inspired by moral convictions and humanity. The work, I say again, before the Church is to show how radical concern for the personal religious salvation of the soul can swell the volume of ethical and social salvation of the community from wrong and suffering. And our difficulty is not the way to do it, but the will to do it. The struggles in societies, in industries, in government, ideas and religion must all advance along the lines of a divine humanity, impeded, checked, reactive, but reasserting themselves in so far as they

are results of the attraction which springs from eternal love : " Every valley shall be exalted . . . and the crooked shall be made straight and the rough places plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together : for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

But, on the other hand, we shall seek in vain for an amalgam between the personal salvation of the soul and the ethical uplifting of the world if we neglect that which is to salvation what birth is to the human life. " When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Conversion is the first and absolute condition of finding salvation, either for the individual or the community. And by conversion I mean the new birth in Christ, which fundamentally changes the purpose of our life from bad to good, from the lower to the higher. This may take place although all the consequences of our new volition are to be developed in us. It is sin—the revolt of our will against the will of God—which is the heart of wrong, and sorrow, and defeat.

There are preventable things that tempt to sin, such as ignorance, law, moral and physical stamina, depressed outlook, and miserable surroundings ; but examine into these things, and you find that they start out from sin, and too often return to it. And none know this better than the more thinking and intelligent working men. They may listen, but they do not believe their would-be teachers who tell them that sin is an invention of the Churches, a fiction cunningly devised by theologians and parsons to justify their own occupation.

They know what they cannot express. They are conscious of something entrenched in their very being, fearful and malignant, which is explainable by no external conditions ; which stands between them and the good they see and ought to do. A working man in Yorkshire once said to me : " I earn good money ; I have as comfortable a home as any man in my position could desire ; my wife is all I could expect in any woman, and my children are dutiful, steady, and earning good wages. Yet I am all but a drunkard and worse. I have

sworn hundreds of times to be a better man, and something in me seems to laugh and say, 'You cannot now, if you would.' "

Working men, to use their own phrase, are learning to "put two and two together." They are becoming very suspicious of men who have nothing to suggest in an experience of this kind beyond a few platitudes about "defect of will," want of "balance and common sense." In this growing suspicion there is significant hostage to the Christian Church. On its larger side, the present failure of the democracy to rise to their opportunities is no new experience.

Half-a-century ago Christianity was all but forgotten in many quarters because of the absorbing expectation of the better times to be ushered in by Free Trade, the extension of the Franchise, and a large system of National Education. I can recall something of the emotion with which as a lad I listened to the preaching of the political glad tidings of great joy. These things may have very largely come to pass, and where be all the miracles which our fathers told us of?

The expectation that died down is being revived in some measure through a socialism which claims to be the economic complement of democracy. Without this, we are told, the political gains of the past have neither value nor meaning. So far as the new expectation is divorced from religion it will merely repeat history. But, like history, it will not be in vain. When it has trodden the same old weary waste of sand and thorns, the wiser and more thoughtful of those held by it will have learned the needful lesson.

What we have to do as Christian Churches is sympathetically but firmly to insist upon the new life, as necessary to the more life and the fuller. We have to maintain our protest that nothing but obedience and response to the mighty appeal, "Be ye reconciled to God," can give us a saved society in saved men.

And things are working for us in directions outside dogmatic Christianity. One of the most hopeful signs of our times, says a wise thinker, is the deepening conviction throughout society that "literature, philosophy, and politics are at

the best means to an end, that in themselves they are entirely lacking in impulse." Men are finding out that nothing endures and answers to expectations but personal goodness. And they are also finding out that you cannot plan and legislate goodness into existence. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh ; and that which is born of the spirit is spirit." "Verily I say unto thee, ye must be born again"; and past the Saviour's word there is no other. Over the extinct volcanoes of once rival enthusiasms Christianity is slowly, but surely, coming to its own. The world is full of men who can tell us what it were good to do ; it has had but one Man who can give us the power to do it. We have abundance of machinery; it is the driving force we need. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men."

My knowledge of working men, such as it is, has been gained from the inside. And this experience has wrought in me the conviction that no class of men accept Christianity, when they do accept it, to more purpose. It may be lack of imagination, or limitation of experience and

education, but they rarely interpret their religion through the love of this world and the things that are in it. You do not find them compromise with institutions in society, which, whatever may be said in their favour, are in their operation no friends to progress, morality, and religion. The Christianity of the working man may be narrow in its permissions, but he has learned to do without many things which modern "breadth" retains with very doubtful advantage.

With working men, again, their religion, when they have it, is their all. It is not the relic of a habit. It is no mere deference to a social arrangement. They see in it everything, they see everything in it.

This may often mean, in their case, lack of perspective, and a zeal without knowledge very trying to people with a larger horizon. I can think of no position less to be envied than that of the minister of a working-class Church, who does not understand, and does not try to understand, the human and acquired nature of the people under his care. But let a minister think

himself into the place of these people, then let him with tact, sympathy, and genuine comradeship lead them into bigger thoughts and better ways, without making it too obvious that they are being led ; and no man in the ministry shall see more fruit for his labour, or have more reason to be satisfied. The working people are often narrow in their opinions ; they do not readily see two sides of a subject ; and once they have hold of what appears to them to be an undeniable proposition, not even children are more remorseless in forcing it to a conclusion.

They have the defects of their qualities in a marked degree, and he who can bring out the qualities and save them from their defects will have least need to be ashamed at the only reckoning which admits of no mistakes.

And, finally, if working men are to be won to Christianity, it must be by the Gospel, and not by something else. In saying this I am not conscious of indulging either dogmatism or cant. It is a conviction born out of my own failures. These men know the need of something not



themselves and greater than themselves, and they want to know, not something about its satisfaction, but the satisfaction itself. The moral and ethical side of religion has its value for them, but it is the expiatory sacrifice which wins and holds them. They live too near the hard, anxious side of life to trouble or care much about theories of atonement, but they know by profound instinct that they have been redeemed by blood, even the precious blood of Christ. No more than the wisest of us do they understand the relation between the death of Christ and the forgiveness of sin, but that there is a relation charged with redeeming power is the faith by which they live, and in which they are prepared to die.

Not by rose-water are we cleansed, but by blood are we justified and saved, and he who cannot pass through the moral into the sacrificial heart of Christianity has no spiritual appeal to the democracy.

"When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren," for it is thus that the personal religious salvation of the soul will work out in the ethical

and social salvation of the community from wrong and suffering.

Get men converted. Then put at their disposal the whole apparatus of moral, ethical, economic, and spiritual resource that they may strengthen into a saved society. How to win the masses of the people to Christ, is no problem if it is to Christ we would win them. It is a question of faith, determination, prayer, passion, consecration. Once we are prepared to pay the price of the cross, and the victory is assured ; and that price must be paid, or the Church, as we know it, must inevitably cease to exist.



## THE MINISTRY AND THE MASSES

“What do ye more than others?”

—*St. Matt.* v. 47

## VIII

### THE MINISTRY AND THE MASSES

THE relation of working men to the Churches is determined by many things, and one of them is worth special consideration. When I think of the impressions received in my artizan days, and compare them with later experience, I have to recognize in crowds of the workers a deep-rooted prejudice, not so much against the office of the ministry as against the men who hold it. That this prejudice is as a stone wall between them, no one who knows the former will seriously question.

It is significant that an ill-will which passes by the professions masses itself against what is held to be a calling. The professions—military, medical and legal—do not escape criticism, but, so far from it being resented, it is valued as

a tribute to the serious character of these institutions in society. The attitude of the middle classes to ministers is one of toleration ; in the lower it is too often one of bitterness and contempt. Nor are ministers, as a body, permitted to regard the temper which is responsible for this attitude as part of the offence of their cross. Honest response to the call of the cross is its own exceeding reward. He who knows himself to be faithful over the few things divinely committed to his care is proof against popular misconception or levity. But the attitude in question has its explanation in the alleged fact that the offence of the cross has all but ceased out of the life of the ordinary minister.

We are reminded that Jesus was a poor man, while among those who preach Him some are rich men, many are comparatively rich, and most who serve the well-to-do Churches are comfortably off. Yet there are multitudes for whose salvation ministers are said to be anxious, destroyed by a poverty that makes the word "salvation" an ironical sound. Jesus lived among the poor, the morally sick, and the

sad ; lived among them as many a physician lives in the midst of disease, not because he loves it, but because he would heal it. It was a bitter taunt hurled at Jesus by the respectable religionists of His day, that He received sinners and ate with them. But how many ministers do we see choosing the Calvary-shadowed road of uncalculating resistance to evils that are simply quick with death and defeat? Are they faithful to rebuke selfishness, without looking round to see in what sense the particular selfishness is represented in supporters of their Churches? Jesus faced these evils and they killed Him. What is your record? ministers are asked. Where are your scars, the marks of the Lord Jesus? The Master counted the cost, and it was the Cross; many of you count the cost, and it is not the Cross, but the crosier, in one form or another. Although you see evils and wrongs that snatch men into perdition, not in tens and fifties, but in whole societies, yet you follow the line of the least resistance, and take refuge in a social casuistry which is but another name for cowardice.



Ministers have an answer to this indictment which, I venture to say, would be sustained by an impartial and competent tribunal. The many should not be judged by the appearances of the few. The popular impression, especially with working men, that ministers have an easy life, is hardly worth notice. I have earned my bread with my hands, and for years it has been my fate to try to earn it with my brains ; but, as a question of mere ease, I would return to my former life, not with resignation so much as positive pleasure and relief. As to the matter of material gain, I doubt not that if the salaries paid to the stated ministry were averaged, the result in what the Yorkshire people call "good money"—money subject to no extraneous charges—would not be found to be startlingly out of proportion to the wages paid to an equal number of skilled and steady artizans. I know scores of educated and cultured ministers who live a life of toil and care for a salary, considered merely as salary, which scores of working men whom I also know would regard with contempt. Only God, and those who bear

it, know the silent suffering that is borne in countless ministers' families. It would be a revelation to many working men and their wives if they knew the pinching and scheming, the very tragedy of economy to bring ends in sight of each other, which is necessary in many homes where they imagine there is enough and to spare.

There is also the worry of the minister's life, which crushes a man as work never can. When the working man lays down his tools, to that extent he lays down his care; the minister's work never is done, and his anxiety is not lost, even in his sleep. Hundreds of ministers, from no moral fault of their own, have to struggle on as best they can under a cloud of seeming failure that never lifts. They know not what a day may bring forth, and there is no more unenviable position than the service of a promiscuous people who are master. If working men knew the real inwardness of the average minister's life they would regret their prejudice which stands between them and the influence of men who, with all their faults, are yet the

redeeming force in society. "That a man stand and speak of spiritual things to men," says Carlyle, "it is beautiful even in its great obscuration and decadence. I wish he could find the point again, this speaking man, and stick to it with tenacity . . . for there is need of him yet."

But when this is said, it does not alter the fact that the prejudice, not to use a stronger term, exists ; and, until they can fight it down, ministers must reckon with it as best they can. Of one thing I am persuaded : it will yield to no assumption of orders ; it is impervious to argument ; and it is proof against appeals to respect the ministerial office for its own sake. Nothing can make an impression on this prejudice but an example which works out in self-sacrifice, character and courage. If ministers are to be highly esteemed, it must be for their work's sake.

It is the first of these that goes to the quick of the problem. It is self-sacrifice. Religion must always find its dynamic through the heart. He who holds the heart in the service

of religion is a giant as compared with a vastly abler man who but influences the mind. "All men are commanded by the soul." The Koran makes a distinct class of those who are by nature good, and whose goodness has an influence on others, and pronounces this class to be the aim of religion. The light of the saintly spirit which, as it has often been remarked, is a form of the heroic spirit, shines through the wrappings of education and dogma, and reveals to us the synthetic power and beauty of sacrifice. It is not reason or ability, it is not money or mechanism, nor these combined, that can effectually lift the race. Nothing, on our side of the question, can do this but good men. Man is God's means for acting upon men. Whether God could save the world apart from human agency we know not. This is certain, He has not so far willed to do so. God in Christ is the Supreme Sacrifice for the salvation of the world; and man's power with man is obedience to the same profound law. "A panic, a crusade, a national awakening; the wonderful conversions of character which have been al-

most instantaneously brought about by the personal exertions of prophets of truth and goodness,"—if you can explain anything in the upward trend of the world without sacrifice, then you may undertake to alter decimals or to count that which is wanting.

That ministers do sacrifice, they who best know them will readily admit. But the sacrifice has become in a sense conventional, and is easily overlooked in a world like ours. It is not enough to remind working men that they are not the only class which feels the strain of things. It is not enough to say that ministers take their share of the burdens of modern life. The answer is to hand, and the masses are not slow to use it: "What do ye more than others?" The truth is that our coming ministers who would have a good conscience in this matter will have to answer this question in the sense of, "What do ye differently from others?" We need a fresh appeal to a faculty that has been obviously neglected in our efforts to influence the people on the side of religion. If pageantry, Macaulay says, be any use in

politics, it is of use as a "means of striking the imagination of the people." We have overlooked the imagination as a means of reaching the people most susceptible to its influence. The daily life of the ordinary minister, hedged about with the usual family and social cares, is too much a part of common experience to excite curiosity. Everything about him outwardly seems to confirm the impression that, like most other people, he is where he is for the crust of bread.

It is one great weakness of our Protestant Churches that we produce so few saints who strike the imagination of the people. We somehow fail, all but entirely, to achieve the type of man and woman which is to the sacerdotal Churches what pageantry or sentiment is in politics. Who, for example, during the last quarter of a century has given nobler hostage to the imagination of the workers than the late Father Dolling? A man who offered his life on the altar of the unreached majority; who lived and moved amid human wreckage and moral hopelessness, probably unmatched on the face

of the earth. Broken in health and consumed in little more than half his days ; living daily, as we are told, with vagabonds at his table and outcasts sleeping at night under his roof, this man's life was an incarnation of the divinest of all motives—the redemption of the lowest in the Saviour's name.

And when he “underwent the ceremony of death” men who rarely speak of the Christian religion without a sneer, and newspapers that exist nearest the ground, bore willing testimony to a sacrifice that finds its way through the imagination to the heart as nothing else can. Father Damien, diseased and rotting among his lepers, and Father Dolling, toiling for the outcasts of London, are of the same spiritual kin. “No man,” says a wise teacher, “ever casts the wealth of his life and the crown of his devotion at the feet of Jesus without quickening the earth with a diviner life, and uplifting it with a new courage.”

Can our Free Churches not give us men who, in some such sense, are a living answer to the penetrating word of our Lord, “What do ye

more than others?" Have we no young men on the threshold of the ministry, or preparing for it, who realize that the Christian conquest of the masses means the future of the Church? Have we no young men whose self-sacrifice can so work upon the imagination of the people as to break through this rampart of prejudice, and lay open the citadel of their heart to the power of the Gospel? Have we no young men who for a time are prepared to surrender thoughts of marriage, with its consequent claims, that they may be free to attack this problem of indifference to religion among the masses, from the inside? We need a new and better *esprit de corps* in the King's warfare, especially in our colleges. We need some break in the continuity of teaching, thinking, expectation, and methods of working, that make our ministers as like each other as are a brood of rooks. Our strong young men must be encouraged to turn their backs upon what are called "desirable settlements" and "good Churches," that for an apostle's hire they may consecrate the rarest gifts, the most strenuous training, to the wants



and woes, the monotony and melancholy, the temptations and sin of our industrial centres. Give us young men who are determined to make desirable settlements and good Churches amidst the waste places of our cities and towns, and the shadows of prejudices and indifference about the things that belong to their peace shall flee away before the dawn of a diviner day for the people. The changeless cross of the living Christ, it has been truly said, calls our best young men as never before to a larger life of sacrifice, prayer, and action. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Let him arise and go hence.

Next to self-sacrifice character can do much to break down popular prejudice against ministers as a class. One of the first and hardest things they have to do is to convince the masses that they preach what they believe, and, as far as possible, live what they preach. Ministers must make men feel that the message which they claim to have received of the Lord Jesus is for themselves, and, as they believe, for others, nothing less than a matter of eternal life

or death. I do not exaggerate when I say that eighteen out of every twenty working men whom I knew intimately in my factory days regarded ministers as men who, like the augurs of ancient Rome, laughed in themselves and to one another over a huge business of make-believe, which it was to their interest to keep in existence as long as possible. I shall say nothing about the unworthy side of the justification for this impression. It has not been to seek in the past, and it can be found to-day. Enough for my purpose to remark that the popular idea is a severe idea, of what is fitting between ministerial profession and conduct. The idea may be unfair, it may be absurd, but it is there, and the minister will disregard it only at the cost of his own influence.

The doctrine, which is now accepted almost without question, that ministers should enter into the pursuits, aims, and recreations of the people among whom they labour may be interpreted too literally. If it mean that he should cultivate an extensive and candid acquaintance with the lives of his people, the doctrine may

pass without serious criticism. But a minister may sympathize with the use of a thing, and yet find himself obliged to take up an attitude of caution towards it because of the abuse of it. I may try to hint my meaning by a reference to amusements. The more thoughtful working men are keenly alive to the danger of this modern craze for amusement on the part of the young democracy. They know that all these athletics gone mad, mean increased indifference about the moral and social questions that so vitally affect their welfare. And ought we to be less anxious about the influence of these on the higher life? It used to be sufficient to say that young people will have amusement, and it should be the care of the Churches to keep it free from questionable associations. Our Churches will soon have to face the fact, not that our young people will have amusement, but that they will have nothing else.

Ministers should be slow to accept it as any part of their duty to cater for the lighter sides of our social life. They owe it to themselves

and to their calling to be very jealous for the highest things in a world that needs no encouragement to seek the lower. "Deep religious earnestness is the first and grand qualification in the teacher," said Dr. Caird ; "it is incomparably the most powerful means of usefulness, and the surest pledge of success." But working men find it hard to identify deep religious earnestness with many developments in our Churches, which ministers are expected to foster in the name of recreation. And the workers will be the last to resent a judicious aloofness in these directions. If a man feel himself called to this great work ; if he have bent his brain to the tasks of learning ; if he know himself to be a workman needing not to be ashamed, then he has a distinctive place in the Christian service. And the people are the first to concede his just claims. They do not ask him to exaggerate himself into the priest ; nor do they ask him out of some fancied protest against the sacerdotal position to speak and act as if he had no recognized position at all. They expect him, not to assert his orders, but to vindicate

his calling in his character. Let him in his own sphere show himself to be a man and a God's man in one, and he need not depend for his popularity or influence upon things which, however lawful they may be, measured by the taste and education of some of his people, are not always expedient for him. Make working men feel and know, to use their own expressive phrase, that the minister is "master of his job," and in regard to more things than amusements he need not torture the exegesis of the admonition to be all things to all men. Let it be recognized that in him grace and gifts are emphasized in character, and the men who now neglect his message out of prejudice against the man will speedily begin to echo the question: "Of all public functionaries boarded and lodged on the industry of modern Europe, is there one worthier of the board he has?"

Then, again, a potent force in the ministry is courage, and it was never more needed. If prejudices against our Churches among the masses are ever to be broken down and divinely avenged ministers must be a vicarious sacrifice

for many of their people. What cannot be found in the former must be found for them in the latter. Any observant person who knows something of the *personnel* of our Churches knows that there are many in them whose lives do much to set up antagonism in the outside world against the truth for which the Churches stand. To deny that wealth and social position carry an influence in our Churches quite out of proportion to their moral value is to trifle with our intelligence. Greed of money, and the most unscrupulous methods to secure it; pursuit of worldly ambition, and the sacrifice of righteousness to realize it, are commonly enough found under the garb of a severe orthodoxy. We need a ministry strong enough in conviction, consistency, and courage, to rebuke this evil spirit. Such a ministry would go far to redeem the Churches in the eyes of the world. We need men in our pulpits who are masters of economic questions, and who, when duty calls for it, can speak to those who grind the face of the poor in sound speech which cannot be condemned. We need men at the same time who

are not ignorant or sentimental apologists for idleness and thriftlessness, which are their own sure Nemesis.

But the courage that is needed pre-eminently is the courage of the Christian message. "I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation," said the great Apostle. There is no lack of power in the world, but it is not power unto salvation. Civilization means the domination of human intelligence over natural conditions; salvation means civilization quickened into life which can be affirmed of God. Until we grasp the difference between that which is native to man, and that which is the gift of God in Jesus Christ, we may talk never so wisely about progress, but we talk in a circle.

It has been often remarked, how great a revolution in favour of Christianity might, under the power of the Divine Spirit, be effected by the intrepidity of even a few minds with courage to affirm without variableness or shadow of turning that out of Christ we do not live; that men may be developed to the highest possible point; but unless they are in Christ linked on to

God, they have no guarantee that what they gain to-day, they shall not lose to-morrow.

I read some time ago the last public utterance of Dr. Westcott, late Bishop of Durham. The occasion was a demonstration of miners, held at that great colliery centre. Those of us who take an interest in the labour movement can readily outline many of the speeches to which these men had listened during the week from their leaders. To most men in the Bishop's position, and with his resources, there would have been the temptation to seize this unique opportunity for a display of a certain order of knowledge, in which the pulpit is generally held to be singularly deficient. Few men could more effectually, for themselves, have corrected this impression. Few men could have exhibited a finer manipulation of Christian ethics, as applied to social questions, without risking the susceptibilities of their hearers with the intrusion of the personal Christ.

But not so this man of God. "It had been his joy," he said, "to watch the steady improvement in the material conditions of labour, and,



as he believed, in the spirit of labour. He felt keenly, however, that their spiritual progress should move with no less rapidity and certainty, than the industrial improvements. And since it was unlikely that he would ever address them again he wanted to tell them what in a long and laborious life he had found to be the prevailing power to sustain right endeavour: the watchword of untiring service for God and man was: 'The love of Christ constraineth us.'"

Speaking from the very edge of the grave to men, saturated, as it were, with the most extreme economic speculations, this aged scholar, thinker and saint, told them the secret of a true life and a progressive world—and the secret is Christ.

Let our tongue cleave to the roof of our mouth rather than by a word we should encourage any impression that the world has its substitute for the dayspring from on high. Let us pray to be, and pray for, men with the courage of our message.

A few men of strength and training, wholly absorbed in a life of faith on the Son of God, would go far to uplift the twentieth century.

Through them God could hasten the day when the sky of His purpose should overarch man's soul with not a cloud to dim its stars. Leagued together as a sacred brotherhood, they would be practically omnipotent for good. What one man cannot do, that man multiplied would be irresistible in doing. Together they could support each other like the famous quadrilateral. Lifted by their high purpose and by Divine communion, far above the little fears and hopes that agitate most men, they would quietly form their plans for God, and in God carry them out. Thus would Christianity determine the destiny of empires, and shape the courses of the world.

*Butler and Tanner, The Selwood Printing Works, Frome, and London*

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